Faulkner's Discourse

An International Symposium

edited with an introduction
by Lothar Hönnighausen

Max Niemeyer Verlag
Tübingen 1989

Gedruckt mit Unterstützung der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft

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Faulkner's discourse : an internat. symposium / ed. with an introd. by Lothar Hönnighausen. – Tübingen : Niemeyer, 1989
NE: Hönnighausen, Lothar [Hrsg.]

ISBN 3-484-40116-8

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Printed in Germany.
Satz: Boy, Regensburg
Druck: Weihert-Druck GmbH, Darmstadt.
Einband: Heinr. Koch, Tübingen

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List of Abbreviations

AA	*Absalom, Absalom!*. New York: Random House, 1936; New York: Modern Library, 1951; New York: Vintage, 1972.
AILD	*As I Lay Dying*. New York: Random House, 1964; New York: Vintage, 1964.
CS	*Collected Stories of William Faulkner*. New York: Random House, 1950; New York: Vintage, 1977.
DRM	*Doctor Martino and Other Stories*. New York: Harrison Smith and Robert Haas, 1934.
EPP	*Early Prose and Poetry*, ed. Carvel Collins. Boston: Little, 1962.
ESPL	*Essays, Speeches & Public Letters*, ed. James B. Meriwether. New York: Random House, 1966.
FAB	*A Fable*. New York: Random House, 1954; New York: Modern Library, 1966.
FD	*Flags in the Dust*, ed. Douglas Day. New York: Random House, 1973.
FU	*Faulkner in the University*, ed. Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1959; New York: Vintage, 1965.
GDM	*Go Down, Moses and Other Stories*. New York: Random House, 1942; with "*and Other Stories*" deleted from the title, New York: Vintage, 1973.
H	*The Hamlet*. New York: Random House, 1964; New York: Vintage, 1973.

ID	*Intruder in the Dust.* New York: Random House, 1948; New York: Vintage, 1972.
LA	*Light in August.* New York: Harrison Smith and Robert Haas, 1932; New York: Random House, 1967; New York: Vintage, 1972.
LG	*Lion in the Garden: Interviews with William Faulkner, 1926–1962*, ed. James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate. New York: Random House, 1968; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980.
M	*The Mansion.* New York: Random House, 1964; New York: Vintage, 1965.
MF & GB	*The Marble Faun and A Green Bough.* New York: Random House, 1965
NOS	*New Orleans Sketches*, ed. Carvel Collins. New York: Random House, 1968.
P	*Pylon. The Corrected Text.* New York: Vintage, 1987.
R	*The Reivers.* New York: Random House, 1962; New York: Vintage, 1966.
RN	*Requiem for a Nun.* New York: Random House, 1951.
S	*Sanctuary.* New York: Random House, 1962; New York: Modern Library, 1964; New York: Vintage, 1967.
SAR	*Sartoris.* New York: Harcourt, 1929; New York: Random House, 1961.
SF	*The Sound and the Fury. New, Corrected Edition.* New York: Random House, 1984.
SL	*Selected Letters of William Faulkner*, ed. Joseph Blotner. New York: Random House, 1977; New York: Vintage, 1978.

SP	*Soldiers' Pay*. New York: Boni and Liveright, 1926; New York: Liveright, 1970.
T	*The Town*. New York: Random House, 1957. New York: Vintage, 1961.
U	*The Unvanquished*. New York: Random House, 1938; New York: Vintage, 1966.
US	*Uncollected Stories of William Faulkner*, ed. Joseph Blotner. New York: Random House, 1979; New York: Vintage, 1980.
WP	*The Wild Palms*. New York: Random House, 1939; New York: Vintage, 1966.

Preface

The present volume is the outcome of an International Faulkner Symposium which took place in June 1987 and was hosted by the University of Bonn. It continued a series of conferences held by a group of European, American and Japanese Faulkner specialists in Paris, Salamanca and Izu (Japan). While the previous symposia were concerned primarily with thematic issues,* this one focused on *Faulkner's Discourse*, on the process of communication as manifested in his narrative language. As this topic attracted an amazing number of promising paper proposals, we allowed the richness of the theme and the diversity of critical methods to influence the shape of our program. I am pleased to be able to say that the wide range of approaches to one specific area of interest has remained the distinctive feature of this volume. I have rearranged the papers under new headings and hope that the organization of the book will prove helpful and add to the enjoyment of the individual papers.

In organizing the conference and preparing this book for press I have incurred more obligations than I can here acknowledge. I should, however, like to express my thanks to André Bleikasten, Ursula Brumm, Michel Gresset, Thomas L. McHaney, Michael Millgate and Noel Polk for invaluable advice and encouragement in planning the symposium. My sincere thanks also go to the Rektor of the University of Bonn for actively fostering the project and to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, most notably Dr. M. Briegel and Dr. J. Wiercimok, and the Wissenschaftsministerium of the State of North Rhine Westphalia for providing funding. I am also grateful to the German Association for American Studies and the Embassy of the United States for giving us their support.

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* *Faulkner and Idealism: Perspectives from Paris*, ed. Michel Gresset and Patrick Samway, S.J. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1983).
Faulkner and History, ed. Javier Coy and Michel Gresset (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 1986).
Faulkner: After the Nobel Prize, ed. Michel Gresset and Kenzaburo Ohashi (Kyoto: Yamaguchi, 1987).

Michel Gresset (Paris), Agostino Lombardo (Rome), François Pitavy (Dijon), Waldemar Zacharasiewicz (Vienna) and Karl F. Zender (University of California, Davis) contributed greatly to the success of the undertaking by chairing the individual sessions at the conference. In organizing the volume I benefited from the expert advice of the Faulkner friends I had asked to act as an advisory board. In addition, Sonja Bašić (Zagreb), Myriam Díaz–Diocaretz (Amsterdam) and Dieter Meindl (Erlangen) deepened my understanding of the theory of discourse. My assistants Claus Daufenbach, Rupert Glasgow and Christoph Irmscher helped with copy–editing and proofreading.

My final thanks go to the participants of the symposium, not only for the papers and contributions to the extensive discussions, but also for the open–mindedness of this large group of scholars from very different intellectual backgrounds. It is to this spirit of fellowship that I dedicate the volume.

Lothar Hönnighausen (Bonn)

Introduction

> What American writer has refused more forcefully the blandishments of the "already said?"
>
> Philip M. Weinstein

The motive both for the symposium and for this volume has been the continuing fascination with Faulkner's amazing narrative and stylistic originality. It comes to light in the epigraph I have taken from Philip Weinstein's fine avantgarde contribution to this book no less than in the great criticism of Cleanth Brooks and the previous generation. But the different historical situation in which we find ourselves today, the new philosophies of Derrida and Foucault, together with the new fiction of Barth and Pynchon, all lead us to a different kind of appreciation, prompting us to pose the basic critical questions in different ways. In conceiving the symposium we agreed that it should reflect the new critical interest in Faulkner's language not as organized in finished, formalist structures, but as emerging from a network of psychological, social and philosophical factors, addressed to and realized in reader–responses.

To establish a frame for the respective critical approaches, the term *discourse* seemed more suitable than others such as *rhetoric* or *style*. The term *rhetoric* has become too closely identified with Booth's very different concept, while *style* refers to the much narrower field of linguistic features. Moreover, these and related terms tend to connote the traditional dichotomy of content and form, an esthetics of mimesis and interpretative models such as the "unified whole" and the "finally achieved and perfected artistic product." What makes *discourse* appear more appropriate for our purpose is that, as a consequence of the contradistinction *discourse – story* (in French criticism: *discours, récit – histoire*; in Russian formalism: *syuzhet – fabula*), the term appears broad enough to accommodate thematic, narrative and stylistic aspects while also embracing the precise methodological implication that thematics belongs to this domain of criticism only in so far as it is narrated and phrased. A further advantage of *discourse* as a metaphor conveying our contemporary critical sensibility is that, on account of its previous use by Emile Benveniste (for whom it de-

noted an oral utterance — *énoncé* — assuming a speaker and a hearer), it draws attention to a literary work as a script for an ongoing and multiform communicative act.

There are, of course, scholars who view any term or approach that smacks of "formalism" and "structuralism" either with traditionalist or deconstructivist scepticism, but most critics nowadays appreciate the impact of linguistic discourse analysis as inspiring the development of relevant and definable categories. Moreover, the term *discourse* has in the meantime gained so many important new dimensions on account of its use by thinkers as diverse as Bakhtin, Derrida and Genette that it seems well suited to accommodate the wide range of papers in this volume and serve as a focus.

Affinities and differences in our conceptions of *discourse* and the venerable *diegesis* of Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Poetics* become abundantly clear when we attempt to assess the distinctive features of both the avantgardist and the more traditional contributions to Faulkner criticism in the present volume. Perhaps the most striking characteristic in this respect is a strong awareness of verbal art as a communicative act and an equally strong doubt about its ontological relation to "extra–verbal verities." This seems to be the common heritage of a generation of critics after Wittgenstein, that grew up in the world as described by McLuhan and is prepared to draw the methodological consequences of Barthes' evangel that "to depict the real is to unroll the carpet of the codes." Without any commonly accepted philosophy that might encourage it to view the literary work as *mimesis* of the world, it prefers to explore it as *metamorphosis*, studying the play which takes place in and around it: "Le jeu aujourd'hui se rend à lui–même," as the "arch"–player Derrida puts it. There are obvious affinities here, not only to postmodernist fiction but also to the ironic play of Nietzsche's aphorisms and Wilde's bons mots, to Pater's "relative spirit" and Borges' parody of the "realistic code." In this context it seems hardly surprising that methodological perspectivism and an eclectic combination of approaches characterize the current criticism of Faulkner as of other authors.

All these original fusions of psychoanalytic and feminist, semiotic and socioeconomic, Bakhtinian and Barthesian questionings have one common tenor: a refusal to limit the critical effort to the textual surface after the manner of the New Critics, — instead combining an emphasis on its quality as discourse with the search for what the Victorians would have called a "deeper" or "hidden" meaning. In this we might see a return to the time–honored modes of typological and allegorical interpretation of the Middle Ages, rediscovered in the nineteenth century and since adapted to "enlightened" secular use in the symbolic interpretations of the Freud-

ians and Jungians. Where the present–day "allegorists" significantly differ from their forebears, however, is in what they tend to come up with from their foraging into the deep: in lieu of the blissful and easy discovery of the divine master plan of the Creation, they "by indirection find directions out" and from the disjunctions and marginalities of the text disentangle its suppressed ideology and psychology. Indeed, in several of these papers a certain critical aggressiveness seems to help fuse heterogeneous elements and provide a heating point or focus where we gain insight into the hidden Faulkner.

The first section of the book shows that one of the major inspirations of present–day criticism, the rediscovery and modificiation of psychoanalysis, exemplified in the deconstructivist reading of Poe's "Purloined Letter," is also making an impact on the study of Faulkner. Philip M. Weinstein relates Faulkner's punitive picture of Mrs. Compson to its ideological background and shows Faulkner on the one hand accepting the kind of role model castigated by Julia Kristeva ("Stabat Mater") while on the other critically portraying in Mrs. Compson the fatal split ("dry ... purity", "wet ... filth") in the Southern image of woman. James A. Snead, who perceives an essential affinity between Freud's "slips" and the "hidden figures of Longinus," draws our attention to litotes and chiasm as narrative and stylistic devices structuring psychological drives, and particularly to the impulses of "Verdrängung" and "Verneinung" in *Absalom, Absalom!*. François Pitavy shares Snead's interest in the interplay of rhetoric and psychoanalysis, and, treating negativity as the unconscious of the discourse, traces the fuller implications of key formulae in *Absalom, Absalom!* such as Rosa Coldfield's "nothusband" and Quentin's "I dont hate it." In view of Faulkner's obsessive use of negation, it is hardly surprising that there are three papers on the subject, supplementing one another. Like Pitavy, Winfried Herget and Jacques Pothier recognize negation as an essential constituent of the paradoxical reality of literature: "only in language can negation accord existence to that which is not, can the presence of absence be maintained," as Herget puts it. He points out how in *Absalom, Absalom!* the peculiar use of negation (i.e. negation as coextensive with the conjectural "perhaps"; asymmetrical negation) alerts the reader to unadmitted cultural fusions and psychological suppressions, and works as a major text–generating principle. Thus, for Herget negation embodies a quintessential quality of fiction, a view corroborated by Pothier who discusses the role of the negation of linear time in creating imaginary space and stresses the connection with the central theme of lying from "The Liar" to *The Reivers*. Close in spirit to Pothier's tracing of imaginary space seems Wolf Kindermann's study of erratic and automaton–like movement. In revealing how, in nodal passages

of dreamlike motion, the Southern unconscious blends with archetypal patterns, this paper also contributes to the appraisal of the psychoanalytic dimension.

One of the decisive forces in the Sixties and Seventies that led beyond the "text as surface" was undoubtedly the emergence in literary criticism of a socioeconomic and political bias. In the eyes of those trained in the sophisticated textual analysis of New Criticism, however, Lukács, Goldmann and the other neomarxist critics had only rather crude tools to offer, while to many younger critics the intricate questions of point of view or style simply appeared irrelevant. What really added a new dimension to literary criticism was a deconstructive crossbreed of socioeconomic, linguistic and psychoanalytic interests, and in conjunction with this, the modified reemployment of the subtle strategies learned from New Criticism. John T. Matthews' essay on "The Rhetoric of Containment" which opens the second section of the book is characteristic of this recent development. Noting the shocklike immediacy with which the beginning of *The Sound and the Fury* hits us, he proceeds to prove that the absence of any framing which might socially contextualize the novel for the reader does not justify Lukács' criticism that modernist fiction neglects actuality. Deriving his approach from Fredric Jameson's *The Political Unconscious*, a book marking particularly well the advance of critical method since the Sixties, Matthews is able to extract from contradictions and disjunctions the ideological motivations which are suppressed, "contained" in the text of *The Sound and the Fury*. It seems quite characteristic of the present situation that Richard Godden and Pamela E. Rhodes share Matthews' basic assumption of Faulkner's text as containing a hidden ideological script, although they use very different methods to unearth this script. Godden, equally aware of recent research on both metaphor and on Southern history, reads *Go Down, Moses* as a narrative in which the figural and the iconic fuse. Finding his clue in the drawing of the "inverted–apex shape" in "Delta Autumn," he explores the sexual and the economic dimension of this icon and reveals the anachronism of the code that tragically conditions Ike McCaslin's world–view. Rhodes takes the treatment of the Byron Snopes character as an indication that Faulkner, although well aware of the "revolt of the rednecks," suppressed the socioeconomic dimension to let esthetic pastoral dominate the tone of his Sartoris novel.

As Peter Nicolaisen and Judith B. Wittenberg teach us, later on, in *Light in August* and *Absalom, Absalom!*, the social dimension becomes the decisive shaping force of narrative discourse. Pointing out the different kinds of crowd behavior, the range of its responses and the emergence of group consciousness, as well as its role as a narrative tool (tellers, reflectors, collective voice), Nicolaisen shows that the communal presence

throws the sufferings of the individual into relief and that the kind of portrayal it receives warrants anything but a nostalgic vision of the Southern community. Wittenberg would probably go along with this view since she points out that *Absalom, Absalom!* both encodes and critiques a prevailing masculinist discourse and culture. While Ellen's own language and that defining her (butterfly–motif) show how she is inscribed into the male dominated structures of the Coldfield and Sutpen households, Rosa's manneristic *parole* — despite the bondage of the patrocentric *langue* — displays considerable deconstructive power.

This rebellious elan is found by Noel Polk to be sadly absent from *A Fable* where in his view the re–employment of phrases from the Nobel Prize speech proves that Faulkner no less than the old general is concerned with preserving order at any price. Taking his inspiration from a Barthesian understanding of myth, Polk reads the novel *à rebours* and takes the cross as the symbol of the repressive structure of Western culture: the oppressed in the novel remain voiceless while Gragnon and the other representatives of the political right may elaborate their "myths."

The Reivers, although occasionally attacked as nostalgic or reactionary, would not warrant the harsh attacks Polk levels at *A Fable.* Nevertheless, the social factor also informs the rhetoric of the comic as Heide Ziegler sees it. Adopting the dissolution of the temporal into the spatial as a paradigm, she shows the novel ironically revealing that "time is not money," but a continuum in which moral growth can take place.

How relevant to recent criticism the social and political dimension has become is evidenced both by the re–interpretation of individual stories such as Ilse Dusoir Lind's of "A Death Drag" and by Karl F. Zender's more widely ranging "Directions for Study." Contextualizing the text (the Thirties, Faulkner's own financial straits, his acting the part of Izzy Goldstein), Lind shows Faulkner deconstructing the language of antisemitic stereotype and developing a new means of expression. Suggesting that we should see *Absalom, Absalom!* as closely related to the conflicts between progress and reaction in the Thirties, Zender is certainly right to emphasize as a distinctive feature of contemporary criticism the "resituating of the moral and ethical themes identified by the first generation of Faulkner critics in political and historical contexts." But as the papers in this section show, the critics of our time also have a greater awareness of the appearance of "social realities" as a part of the literary discourse.

These methodological reflections are naturally most intense when they concern the epistemological and technical problem of narration itself. They lead not only to a subtler understanding of Faulkner's discourse but also — as the papers by Sonja Bašić and Dieter Meindl illustrate — to a reconsideration and more satisfactory appraisal of the whole Faulkner–

corpus. Bašić, working with the categories established by Genette, documents that the move from *The Sound and the Fury* to *The Hamlet* is not a relapse into a conventional form of narration, but an advance beyond the "involvement" and "mimesis" of individual streams of consciousness to a new type of novel of *diegesis*, with distancing strategies as a distinctive feature. Meindl discusses the same development in terms of a major change in Faulkner's epistemological stance, speaking of a shift from the "stream of consciousness" novel to the novel of the "stream of life." Clearly, after Bašić and Meindl, Faulknerians can abandon their awkward double–standards and appreciate *The Hamlet* not only as an eminent, but also as an innovative novel. With our postmodernist recognition that the stream of consciousness technique can no longer be regarded as the peak of avantgardism we may even learn to appreciate Faulkner's later works more in their own right. For if one poses the radical question "what would we have lost if Faulkner had died in 1942?", as James E. Carothers does, one finds not only the public figure, but also an amazingly productive, if very different novelist. When does Faulkner's late work begin, asks Michael Millgate, pointing out the huge difference between *A Fable*, *The Town*, *The Mansion* and *The Reivers*.

After Faulkner's subtle narrative strategies have been a prime target of criticism for so long, the present phase of re–appraisal is marked in addition by a new and strong interest in Faulkner's language. Testifying to this shift of emphasis are both Stephen M. Ross's examination of four major discursive practices in the representation of thought and André Bleikasten's systematic study of the metonymic and metaphoric qualities of Faulkner's description, "of the excitement with the sheer movement and momentum of describing" that reminds Bleikasten of the Fauves and Expressionists and their dramatization of a vanished presence. How richly present–day sensibility responds to Faulkner's style is shown by Kenzaburo Ohashi's study of "writing" and "telling" as two basic opposing forces, by Michel Gresset's tracing of the "idealistic leitmotif" of the "puny voice," and by Michiko Yoshida's subtle registering of the power Faulkner's language draws from its peculiar interplay with silence.

Does the new interest in Faulkner the great stylist betoken a lessening of interest in the great narrator? Far from it. It is rather the case that, as a consequence of the shift in categories and fusion of methods noted above, there is a tendency to see style and narrative techniques as more intimately related. This is demonstrated by papers as diverse as Hans Skei's critical assessment of the achievement and failure of the short stories, and Patrick Samway's "Narration and Naming in *The Reivers*." Myriam Díaz–Diocaretz's comparison of Temple Drake in *Sanctuary* and *Requiem for a Nun*, hinging as it does on the category of modality, illustrates well that

it is the impact of linguistics that has made it natural for us to deal with thematics and narrative strategies, structure and style in one line of argument. The extent to which the telling and the theme of the story can achieve an ideal fusion emerges from Ursula Brumm's discussion of "Old Man" where the immersion in the "stream of life" transforms the inarticulate imitator of literary trash into the creator of the tale of his initiation. In view of Faulkner's extensive use of literary motifs and his fondness for Cervantes, Brumm's suggestion that the "mistaken application of literature to life" was inspired by Don Quixote seems convincing. The several literary allusions in "Beyond" prompt Mick Gidley to weave a subtle literary con–text in which *As I Lay Dying* and the open–ended title story of the final section of *Collected Stories* communicate and enact the openness of the metaphysical question.

Our new awareness of the element of openness in Faulkner, of his different forms of perspectivism, from the juxtaposition of streams of consciousness in *The Sound and the Fury* to the interplay of narrators and styles in his later career, make it understandable that Mikhail Bakhtin, who is being rediscovered in the United States, should appeal to Faulknerians. In his interpretation of *The Reivers,* Patrick Samway takes his cue from Bakhtin's reading of *The Golden Ass* by Lucius Apuleius, a book that was in Faulkner's library, while Thomas L. McHaney demonstrates from *Light in August* that Bakhtin's "dialogicity" or "heteroglossia," arising from the interaction of "languages," provides a more adequate concept for a re–appraisal of Faulkner than the harmonizing concept of Cleanth Brooks or the unifying principle of John Tucker's structuralism. The Bakhtinian reading, McHaney suggests, would allow us to accommodate both the folkloristic element and the modernistic, Bergsonian concept of time in Faulkner, while still not forbidding us to join Michael Millgate in taking an orthodox philological look at the revision procedures in the typescripts of the late novels.

Clearly, the contributions to this volume show a considerable variety in theme and method. Nevertheless, they share an essential quality: they have not grown out of random antiquarian pursuits but reflect a continuous and contemporary commitment to Faulkner. It therefore seems not inappropriate that postmodernist reflections (Gerhard Hoffmann) on the problematic status of history, truth and identity in our favorite, *Absalom, Absalom!*, serve as the conclusion to *Faulkner's Discourse.*

Lothar Hönnighausen (Bonn)

The New Impact of Psychoanalysis

Philip M. Weinstein (Swarthmore)

"If I Could Say Mother": Construing the Unsayable about Faulknerian Maternity

My title sounds insistently psychoanalytic, promising to uncover the covered-up, to find the key that will unlock the text and reveal its hitherto concealed treasure. This game of penetrating/mastering is itself distinctly phallic, and I find no value in aggressively pursuing the mother in its terms. So I say at once that I cannot say the Unsayable about Faulknerian maternity, that my remarks bear directly only on the brilliantly disturbed novels between *Flags in the Dust* and *Light in August*, and that the text I shall examine in this limited essay — the source of the quotation in my title — is *The Sound and the Fury*. I want to argue that Faulkner's rendering of Mrs. Compson is, within the representational economy of the novel, uniquely punitive, and then to articulate the model that underlies that rendering. Thereafter I want to reconceive the model, drawing on some contemporary feminist criticism, and then return to Mrs. Compson. Finally I shall suggest ways in which Faulkner's texts of this troubled period are trying to say Mother and how they are succeeding.[1]

"If I could say Mother" recurs twice in Quentin's section of *The Sound and the Fury*, and in each case the phrase arises out of the memory of an April 1910 conversation between Herbert Head and Mrs. Compson. I quote the first passage (Quentin is "hearing" his mother talk):

> what a pity you had no brother or sister *No sister no sister had no sister* Dont ask Quentin he and Mr Compson both feel a little insulted when I am strong enough to come down to the table I am going on nerve now I'll pay for it after it's all over and you have taken my little daughter away from me *My little sister had no. If I could say Mother. Mother*
>
> Unless I do what I am tempted to and take you instead I dont think Mr. Compson could overtake the car.
>
> Ah Herbert Candace do you hear that *She wouldn't look at me soft stubborn jaw-angle not back-looking* You needn't be jealous though it's just an old woman he's flattering a grown married daughter I cant believe it.
>
> Nonsense you look like a girl you are lots younger than Candace color in your cheeks like a girl *A face reproachful tearful an odor of camphor and of tears a voice weeping steadily and softly beyond the twilit door the twilight-colored smell of honeysuckle.* (*SF*, 95)

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[1] I want to express here a general indebtedness to my colleague Abbe Blum who made my path through contemporary feminist criticism more manageable.

In the second passage, near the end of Quentin's section, the smell of gasoline on his shirt re–evokes this same scene of Herbert and the car, and it concludes with *"if I'd just had a mother so I could say Mother Mother"* (*SF*, 172).

Quentin's arresting phrase of abandonment is embedded, both times, in the context of Mrs. Compson's own fantasy–return to adolescence. As she flirts with Herbert, drawing on the social model she used to know, that of the Southern belle, her son registers her maternal absence from his life. "Color in your cheeks like a girl *A face reproachful tearful an odor of camphor and of tears*": these are the only roles Mrs. Compson can play — pre-marital coquetry or post-maternal grief. Her abandonment of her children emerges here as saturated in the rituals and assumptions of her own virginal past: between her childless adolescence and her child–complicated middle age no other viable script has become available to her. Between virginal flirtation and post–maternal complaint Mrs. Compson literally has nothing else to say.

She will not be a mother; she also refuses to be a wife. Faulkner ensures that Benjy's first memories of Mrs. Compson join her not with her husband but with Uncle Maury. The novel signals recurrently that the man most on her mind, the man she uses as a shield between herself and Mr. Compson, is Uncle Maury. In this textual sense he vies with Mr. Compson for the position of husband. (One might argue that her textual husband is her son Jason, with whom she maintains a peculiarly intense relationship; in this regard they echo Gerald Bland and his mother, also an oddly incestuous pairing in which the titular husband has been conveniently removed.)[2] In either case Mr. Compson himself is arguably the third male in his wife's life. Appearing most saliently in Quentin's chapter he registers textually more as his son's father than as his wife's husband.

Her brother Maury may well serve as her way of remaining a Bascomb, of refusing to consummate her entry into Compsonhood. (My discovery at the Oxford Mississippi Faulkner Conference last summer that Faulkner's family pronounces Maury as Murry — the name of Faulkner's father — strengthens this fantasy conflation of the mother's brother with the mother's husband.)[3] Incestuous pairings thus suggest themselves at the parental level as well, and Mrs. Compson's preference for her brother leads with compelling logic to Quentin's preference for his sister. Refusing to be a wife, Caroline Bascomb refuses to be a mother, and Caddy must therefore — and fatally — play that role for her brothers.

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[2] Here, as elsewhere, André Bleikasten's *The Most Splendid Failure: Faulkner's* The Sound and the Fury (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1976) has already prepared the ground. See 225 (n.24) for commentary on the Blands.

[3] I am indebted to conversations with James Hinkle for this information.

The picture of Mrs. Compson that emerges is of a woman whose life ceased to be narratable after her entry into marriage and its sexual consequences. She has no stories to tell that can accommodate in a positive way even a grain of her post–consummation experience. Her entry into mature sexuality is swiftly followed by her exit: having delivered her children, she takes to her bed — the childbed not the marriage bed — acting like a child, exacting from her children the sustenance she should be offering them.

She speaks obsessively of the rules she learned before marriage, and of her refusal to learn anything different since:

> "Yes," Mother says. "I suppose women who stay shut up like I do have no idea what goes on in this town.'"'Yes," I [Jason] says, "They dont."
>
> "My life has been so different from that," Mother says. "Thank God I dont know about such wickedness. I dont even want to know about it. I'm not like most people." (SF, 259)

I am still a virgin, her camphor and tears keep saying: I don't know anything about checks, about report cards, about business deals, about what girls do on the street or within their own bedrooms. Weeping and mourning, ritually heading for the cemetery throughout the novel, she registers her marital and maternal experience as a curse that makes a mockery of all her training: "when I was a girl I was unfortunate I was only a Bascomb I was taught that there is no halfway ground that a woman is either a lady or not" (*SF*, 103).

This shrill either–or posture indicates that it is Mrs. Compson, not her husband, who is possessed by the Symbolic order. Despite John Irwin and other critics who fault Mr. Compson for not upholding paternal authority, his considerable appeal resides in the candor of his perception that a Symbolic order based upon traditional notions of morality and virginity is bankrupt, that it is an invented script.[4] His wife, however, lives wholly encased in these notions. She thus incarnates what Roland Barthes terms the cultural code, the always already known: "If we collect all such knowledge, all such vulgarisms, we create a monster, and this monster is ideology," Barthes writes.[5] Mrs. Compson is such an ideological monster.

We touch here upon the source of her failure as a mother. Deformed by her social training — a training shaped by class and race to the require-

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[4] Irwin develops this reading of Mr. Compson throughout his *Doubling and Incest, Repetition and Revenge: A Speculative Reading of Faulkner* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980). See especially 67, 75, 110–13, and 120–22. Bleikasten reads the father also in terms of his failure "as lawgiver" (113). See also Bleikasten's "Fathers in Faulkner," *The Fictional Father: Lacanian Readings of the Text*, ed. Robert Con Davis (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press), 115–45.

[5] Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), 97.

ments of virginity — she abandons her own flesh and blood upon the loss of that virginity. She has outlived her image of herself. Simultaneously rushing forward to death and backward to childhood, she repeats herself and takes to black. The novel's attack upon her seems to be this: Mothers are meant to nourish their young; they have no business with (male) ideological scripts.[6]

This paradigm of ideology perverting maternity may shed light on that strange scene in which Jason wrestles with his mother over the key to Quentin's room. Noel Polk has pointed to the repression wrought into this image of the key–laden woman, but there is a sexual dimension to the assault as well.[7] Faulkner takes a full page to show us Jason all over his mother, "pawing" at her skirt, while she resists the attack. Finally, " 'Give me the key, you old fool!' Jason cried suddenly. From her pocket he tugged a huge bunch of rusted keys on an iron ring like a mediaeval jailer's ..." (*SF*, 281).

Pawed at, pressed, her invaded pocket reveals its cache of hideous keys like a grotesque parody of the children who should instead have come forth from her womb. And indeed her womb is terrifying: a space imaged here as rusted, iron, a jailer's fortress, as earlier it had been implied by Quentin's image of the dark place in which he was imprisoned: "the dungeon was Mother herself" (*SF*, 173).

No child escapes from this dungeon, and insofar as the dungeon is a womb, no child gets fully born. In place of nourishment she feeds her children repressive ideology, and they sicken on it. From Mrs. Compson's failure to mother we move through her daughter Caddy's failure to mother and finally, reductively into *her* daughter Quentin's refusal to conceive. "Agnes Mabel Becky," the phrase spoken by the man in the red tie upon seeing that shiny container connected with Quentin, is the term used half a century ago in the South for a three–pack of condoms.[8] Mrs. Compson's inability to nourish here literalizes into her grand-daughter's unwillingness even to try.

Noel Polk helps us to generalize the model that Mrs. Compson fails abysmally to embody. He writes of Faulkner's mothers of this period as "almost invariably, horrible people," failing to meet "even minimal stan-

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6 This is one of the reasons that Lena Grove (not to mention Dewey Dell or Eula Varner) can be rendered with such affection: she does not meddle in the Symbolic order. Her unflappable comments about a family needing to be together "when a chap comes" (*LA*, 18) are tonally the very reverse of Mrs Compson's outraged protestations.

7 Noel Polk, "'The Dungeon Was Mother Herself': William Faulkner: 1927–1931," *New Directions in Faulkner Studies*, ed. Doreen Fowler and Ann J. Abadie (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1984), 61–93.

8 Paul Gaston, Professor of History at the University of Virginia, supplied me with this delectable bit of information.

dards of human decency, much less . . . the ideal of mother love as the epitome of selfless, unwavering care and concern."[9] "Selfless, unwavering care and concern": this is exactly what these mothers lack. It is also what they are posited by the culture as *supposed to possess*, and what they are excoriated for not possessing. Freud writes in his study of Leonardo: "A mother's love for the infant she suckles and cares for is something far more profound than her later affection for the growing child. It is in the nature of a completely satisfying love–relation."[10] Freud assumes, as does Faulkner, that, unlike fathers (unlike indeed all other human beings), mothers enjoy "a completely satisfying love–relation." They *naturally* fullfill their identity in this bond with the infant. Mothers are defined as just those creatures whose subjective needs are supremely realized through the act of nurturing their own offspring.

Freed from ideology themselves, reservoirs of milk and loving kindness, mothers are meant to be sacred servants. *The Sound and the Fury* hammers this point home in the fourth chapter through the massive comparison, move for move, of Mrs. Compson with Dilsey, the latter a perfect instance of how mothers should care for offspring. And what is Dilsey's model? Surely the Virgin Mary herself, celebrated in the Reverend Shegog's sermon as Jesus' inexhaustibly loving "mammy [who] suffered de glory en de pangs," who "helt him at de nightfall, whilst de angels singin him to sleep," and who filled heaven with "de weepin en de lamentation" (*SF*, 296) at his death. This model of what a mother is supposed to do resonates throughout not just *The Sound and the Fury* but countless narratives in Western culture, and I now want to discuss some of its premises.

It assumes that the Word — the realm of spirit, of the Symbolic — is articulated through a male voice, announcing the Kingdom of Heaven. Mary serves as the bodily carrier of the spirit. Her function is to nurse her infant son and to bemoan his tragic death. She emerges thus — in her role as the suffering mother, the ubiquitous Pietá of Western art — as a register for the emotional loss suffered through Christ's crucifixion. She herself has no new word to utter, but her natural care for her child is the precondition for his divine utterance in which he reveals his kinship with his father.

If we secularize this text, we arrive at something like the following. The domain of the father is the domain of the Spirit, of all Symbolic activities that make up culture and that achieve articulation in the medium of language. This domain thus takes the inherently binary form of lan-

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[9] Polk, 66.

[10] Sigmund Freud, "Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, XI (London: The Hogarth Press, 1953), 117.

guage, an endless series of constructed oppositions that constitute the (male) paradigm of meaning itself. The domain of the mother, on the other hand, is the domain of the unfissured, pre-linguistic body. Her function is so to nourish the child that he (the model for the child is implicitly male) becomes somatically prepared for the vertigo and alienation that accompany entry into the Symbolic order of the father. In other words, the time of bonding exists as a pre–linguistic, pre–logical plenitude in which mother and child are each each other, in which self and world, self and other interpenetrate. If successful, this quasi–magical bonding bequeathes to the child somatic sufficiency — bodily grounding — that enables him to sustain his later and life–long encounter with the world outside himself, and eventually to deliver his word within that world.

The gender distinctions essential to this paradigm are, I think, common to the discourses of both Christianity and psychoanalysis. The mother is simultaneously sacred and subservient, the enabler but not the speaker of the word. If we return to Faulkner with this script in mind, we can better place the anger towards the mother that suffuses the early novels. In those novels the mother fails at her sacred bodily task. Charged with pre-oedipal responsibilities, she not only neglects these but barges into the terrain of the law, often in its most repressive forms. The unnourished child therefore emerges in the world too soon: he has no somatic grounding that might hold the imprint of the culture's proliferating codes, and consequently no stable maps for sorting out the *"maelstrom of unbearable reality"* (*AA*, 150). Thus we get Benjy, Quentin, Darl, Vardaman, and Joe Christmas: boy children unsure of the integrity of their own bodies, dizzyingly vulnerable to sensory overload, unable to maintain their identity within boundaries that might stabilize the relations between past and present, there and here, self and other, male and female, child and parent, brother and sister, white and black.

French and American feminists seem to agree that this male-scripted model of the non–speaking mother is more disabling than empowering. In "Stabat Mater" Julia Kristeva critically explores the myth of the Virgin Mary.[11] Focusing on the iconography of breast, ears, and tears, Kristeva reads the Virgin as a figure of speechless succor. One of Kristeva's commentators, Mary Jacobus, writes:

> The function of the Virgin Mother in Western symbolic economy (according to Kristeva) is to provide an anchor for the nonverbal and for modes of signification closer to primary processes. In the face of the fascinated fear of the powerlessness of language which sustains all belief, the Mother is a necessary

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[11] Julia Kristeva, "Stabat Mater," *The Female Body in Western Culture: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Susan R. Suleiman (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 99–118.

> pendant to the Word in Christian theology — just as the fantasized preverbal mother is a means of attempting to heal the split in language, providing an image of individual signs, plenitude, and imaginary fulness ...[12]

This subconscious text of the ideal mother as sanctuary, as preverbal plenitude, as pendant to the word and yet also a preserve against its possible emptiness, exerts a powerful punitive influence upon the representation of women in secular texts, including (as we have seen) Faulkner's texts. Kristeva, for her part, is in the difficult position of seeking to maintain the centrality of the preoedipal bonding without fetishizing it or making it immune to stress. Jacobus goes on to say that "for Kristeva, division is the condition of all signifying processes. No preoedipal language, no maternal discourse, can be free of this split."[13] Kristeva enacts this split in her essay by inserting another discourse (this one fragmented, impulsive, lyrically focused on childbirth, breastfeeding, and body parts — what she calls the "semiotic") within the surrounding "Symbolic" portion of her text.[14]

The entry of the "semiotic" into the discourse of maternity would both restore the maternal body within language itself and announce that the mother's desire is — like all desire — conflicted and tension–filled, rather than speechlessly satisfied through the suckling of her son. Thus Kristeva would revise that previous scripting of maternal desire according to a male code — what she punningly calls "père*version*". These feminist revisions (in their insistence that women's desire exceeds male scripts for maternity, that women's desire must find a way into language, that maternity must be demythologized and approached from the perspective of the mother herself) allow us to see how gender biases in that previous script polarize Faulkner's representational strategies.

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[12] Mary Jacobus, "Dora and the Pregnant Madonna," *Reading Woman: Essays in Feminist Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 169.

[13] Jacobus, 169.

[14] Kristeva describes the mother's extraordinary experience of one–in–two/two–in–one in terms that illuminate Faulkner's fear of and fascination with this figure: "For a mother ... the arbitrariness that is the other (the child) goes without saying. For her the impossible is like this: it becomes one with the implacable. The other is inevitable, she seems to say, make a God of him if you like; he won't be any less natural if you do, for this other still comes from me, which is in any case not me but an endless flux of germinations, an eternal cosmos. This maternal quietude, more stubborn even than philosophical doubt ... eats away at the omnipotence of the symbolic ... Such an attitude can be frightening if one stops to think that it may destroy everything that is specific and irreducible in the other, the child: this form of maternal love can become a straitjacket, stifling any deviant individuality. But it can also serve the speaking subject as a refuge when his symbolic carapace shatters to reveal that jagged crest where biology transpierces speech: I am thinking of moments of illness, of sexual–intellectual–physical passion, death ..." (117–18).

Let us now return to Mrs. Compson. What we see is a portrait of maternity crazily arrested in the "virginal" phase of the Virgin Mary model. Of the three divine components — succor, silence, and virginity — she has betrayed the two that Faulkner values and retained the one that he deconstructs. The ideal silent nourisher has degenerated into a non-nourishing non-stop talker. Moreover, the language that pours out of her is wholly male-scripted; she speaks the defective Symbolic order at its most repressive.

Her white middle class culture insists not merely that her desire be contained within mothering purposes; rather, given the American South with its array of racial phobias, her desire is virtually taboo.[15] Enjoined to marry and to procreate, Mrs. Compson is also enjoined to abhor her status as an incarnate creature replete with sexual organs. She may now appear to us more clearly what she is — a socially constructed figure — taught by her culture in such a way as to be unable to survive her own sexual initiation. The only story she has learned is a virginal one, and on this she dwells, within this she hides from the unbearable facts of her own parturition: a son whose idiocy indicts the very fertilization of egg by sperm; a daughter whose burgeoning sexuality promises, at best, the same disaster she has undergone; another son whose needs she did not (could not) assuage, and who punished her for it by suiciding; and a third son whose fantasy name of Jason Bascomb assures her that he is hers alone: no Compson seed in him, she is still a virgin.

Why has her adoption of the virginal script kept her from also participating in the nurturance script? Why does the tension (always latent) between these two "stories" become so inflamed in Faulkner's narratives? To answer this, we might look at Faulkner's representation of the female body in *The Sound and the Fury*. In so doing we discover that the other story for Mrs. Compson, the nurturance story, is simply intolerable in its fetishistic focus on the body and its linkage of fecundity with filth. The polarization of these two stories reveals the suffocating binarism of the culture's texts of female maturation:

> Because women so delicate so mysterious Father said. Delicate equilibrium of periodical filth between two moons balanced. Moons he said full and yellow as harvest moons her hips thighs. Outside outside of them always but. Yellow. Feet soles with walking like. Then know that some man that all those mysterious and imperious concealed. With all that inside of them shapes an outward suavity

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[15] Joel Kovel's *White Racism: A Psychohistory* (New York: Vintage, 1970) attempts to chart psychoanalytically this intersection of race, gender, and history. Winthrop Jordan's authoritative *White Over Black* (New York: Norton, 1968) attends less psychoanalytically to these matters, while James Snead's *Figures of Division: William Faulkner's Major Novels* (New York: Methuen, 1986) usefully places the issue of racial polarization within the larger problematic of Western philosophy's falsely polarizing yet inescapable binarisms.

> waiting for a touch to. Liquid Putrefaction like drowned things floating like pale rubber flabbily filled getting the odor of honeysuckle all mixed up. (*SF*, 128)

If the virginal story presupposes a blank body (a body, as Luce Irigaray puts it, that is "pure exchange value . . . nothing but the possibility, the place, the sign of relations between men"),[16] the body Quentin fantasizes here is unbearably full, though no less constructed through a male lens. (How telling that Mr. rather than Mrs. Compson speaks to Quentin of menstruation.) This "delicate" body is more urgently imagined as huge–moonlike (moons that sway the blood tides, moons that are her hips and thighs), filled with liquid rot, spaces that you desire to enter and in which you drown: this is a disaster site. It is also a female womb. A place of periodical filth, this womb is obsessively scripted within an economy of decay: what could *grow* here? The mother's threat seems most to inhere in her leaky and fluctuating wetness, a female wetness that menaces all projects of male enclosure and mastery.

Luce Irigaray has written suggestively of the male hostility to fluidity ("La mécanique des fluides," in *Ce Sexe qui n'en est pas un*), and Jane Gallop discusses her argument as follows: "Fluidity has its own properties. It is not an inadequacy in relation to solidity. In phallic fantasy, the solid-closed-virginal body is opened with violence; and blood flows. The fluid here signifies defloration, wound as proof of penetration, breaking and entering, property damage . . . [But] menstrual blood is not a wound in the closure of the body; the menstrual flow ignores the distinction virgin/deflowered."[17] Most of Faulkner's males recoil in horror from this female economy of the blood. *Sanctuary* and *Light in August* are concerned with male-induced penetrations of the body; the blood they focus on is the blood that men can make flow, the blood whose flowing signals male mastery or possession of the object. Or it is the symbolic "blood" of patriarchal lineage or racial difference, not the material blood that simultaneously — and so troublingly to the male mind — carries growth and decay.[18]

A "dry" virginal script that denies desire and repudiates intercourse, a "wet" adulterate script that concedes desire and equates the fertile womb

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[16] Luce Irigaray, *Ce Sexe qui n'en est pas un* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1977), 181. Translation mine.

[17] Jane Gallop, *The Daughter's Seduction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 83.

[18] Adequate consideration of this point would take more space than I can allow. The male penchant to treat errant liquids as containable solids is a strategy of colonization that surfaces also in the well–constructed plots — built upon oppositions encountered and satisfyingly overcome — of male narrative itself. Gallop writes, "This problem of dealing with difference without constituting an opposition may just be what feminism is all about ..." (93). Roland Barthes sees the work of the critic as an attempt to keep difference from degenerating into

with rot and drowning: there are no other alternatives in *The Sound and the Fury's* lexicon for constructing maternity. "I was taught that there was no halfway ground that a woman is either a lady or not." In Mrs. Compson's desiccated Symbolic world ladies and sex organs are incompatible notions. This polarization means that, here and elsewhere, Faulkner's narrative treatment of white maternity takes a schizoid form.

On one side there is the "wet" drama — always illicit, always for not–ladies — of a sexed and rebellious younger woman heading toward labor (Caddy, Dewey Dell, Lena, to a certain extent Temple, Charlotte, and Eula). This drama, suffused with desire, focuses powerfully on the scandal of the penetrated and/or swelling body itself. Faulkner seems mesmerized by this image of the female body escaping the propriety of its male proprietor — usually the husband/father/brother who would confine its activity within the scripts of the Symbolic order. Because that order is (and needs to be shown as) fictitious, this drama is usually narrated with sympathy. But the mothers–to–be in this drama are mute; they are mainly subsumed within their own bodies. When, later (as with Temple and Eula), Faulkner does endow them with speech, they have become defenders — often tragic defenders — of the Symbolic. It seems that they cannot simultaneously break the law and speak.

On the other side, there is the "dry" retrospective drama within which are imprisoned the proper wives, the repressed older women heading toward menopause or death. Mrs. Compson, Joanna Burden in fantasy, and of course Addie Bundren — a case unto herself — come to mind.[19]

In general Faulkner cannot keep his narrative eye on the *same* woman moving through all the stages of the female life cycle. Maternity is thus a sort of narrative Waterloo: an incoherent zone his fiction can lead up to and away from but which none of his women can traverse and still remain themselves. Is it too much to say that once his pregnant women *deliver*, they cease to be figures of desire, for he has then entered the fantasy role of their infant needing succor? In any case, the representation of maternity ruptures on this incoherence.

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opposition: "... difference dispenses with or triumphs over conflict. Conflict is sexual, semantic; difference is plural, sensual, and textual; meaning and sex are principles of construction, of constitution; difference is the very movement of dispersion, of friability, a shimmer; what matters is not the discovery, in a reading of the world and of the self, of certain oppositions but of encroachments, overflows, leaks, skids, shifts, slips" (*Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, trans. Richard Howard [New York: Hill and Wang, 1977], 69).

[19] Addie Bundren is the exception to my schema, the closest Faulkner ever comes to narrating an unco–opted female's move from virginity through intercourse and maternity and child–nurturing into adulthood. This move in *As I Lay Dying*, however, is rendered as anything but continuous: Addie's remarkable awareness of body and presence of mind are premised upon her dying.

With these constricting representational scripts in mind, I conclude by returning to Mrs. Compson's plight. As the quotation in my title indicates, we see her — Faulkner sees her — only through the freighted and damaged lenses of her offspring. (Indeed, the psychoanalytic discourse itself — and *a fortiori* its commentary on the mother — has centered, until recently, upon the child in need. What treatment the mother has received has tended to come very sharply angled.) This narrative deprivation of sympathy is decisive. Yet Mrs. Compson's gestures, when attended to against the grain of the text itself, have their pathos. Her refusal to accede to the name of Compson, for example, is heavily marked as vanity, though we might also see it as a desperate attempt to preserve a shred of her own identity from the marital exchange that alters her name from that of one male to that of another. (If she were a male being exchanged, if she were Joe Christmas or Charles Etienne de Saint Velery Bon, we would be invited so to read her.) Behind her tyranny within the house we can espy a woman with no other moves to make.

"It is our duty to shield [your lady mother] from the crass material world as much as possible" (*SF*, 224), Uncle Maury writes Jason: shield her while we men invest her money in the real world of business affairs. Jason, for his part, plays the check–burning ritual upon her once a month: men know better, they are permitted to discard when necessary the unreal rhetoric of honor (the no longer valid terms of the Symbolic). Mrs. Compson may also, at rare moments, know better — "If you want me to I will smother my pride and accept them [the checks from Caddy]" (*SF*, 219) — but she remains imprisoned within her learned rhetoric, forced to believe she is repudiating her daughter's money. Born and brought up within defective male Symbolic scripts, she spends each day dying within those same scripts. "The dungeon was Mother herself," Quentin thinks, his mother is the jailor. Yes, she is the jailor, but she is also the jail and the inmate. Alienated from the powers of her own body, deprived by male scripts of any language of access to her own bodily desires, she is the prisoner of her own womb. The dungeon is not mother but motherhood.

I have sought to indicate the ways in which Faulkner's representational strategies cannot say mother. Let me finish by suggesting that the fiction of this troubled period is nevertheless engaged, paradoxically, in "trying to say" Mother. "I was trying to say," Benjy tells us, and Faulkner invents an extraordinary rhetoric to convey to us the tangled torment of Benjy's "say." What American writer has refused more forcefully the blandishments of the "already said"? Although Faulkner never spoke of it as the Symbolic order, although he never thought of language as decisively

marked by gender, although he would certainly have cringed at neologisms like phallogocentrism, yet in a certain sense he knew. He knew that language is the Symbolic, that it comes to us alienated from our speechless feeling, and that if words are to do more than be a shape to fill a lack, they must be tortuously re–invented, re–combined, such that the "self" they articulate may appear in its incarnate, decentered, and insecurely gendered pathos. And he would have agreed with post–structuralists that, even in his most ambitious undertakings, he failed to make the words (which "go straight up in a thin line," *AILD*, 165) ever cling to the earth.

What he created in his most experimental early work seems to me analogous to Kristeva's "semiotic": a use of language that gets behind the crisp and repressed male structures of the Symbolic, and that is seeking to make its way back to the mother. Radically non–judgmental, open to the confusions of past and present, self and other, Faulkner's experimental rhetoric depends so often upon immediate, undemarcated identification. "The process of coming unalone is terrible" (*AILD*, 59), Dewey Dell says in *As I Lay Dying*: Faulkner in his early masterpieces frees language from its conventional forms of thinking and feeling in just such a way as to enact this terrifying collapse of ego boundaries that is common to psychosis, to discovery, and to motherhood. The powerfully regressive urge of Faulkner's work of this period — its focus on assault, overwhelming, the unchosen — testifies, I think, to his desire to articulate the subject's inexpressible vulnerability.

Identification is itself primordially rooted in the infantile relation with the mother; perhaps this is why Freud was so wary of its capacity to erode ego boundaries.[20] One of his recent critics writes that for Freud, "Maturity (that is, *masculine* maturity) means being well–defended against one's past, which amounts to the same thing as having a strong capacity for resisting identification. ... In effect, Freud's picture of maturity is of a man driven to outrun ... identification with the body of his mother, the original unity of mother and infant."[21]

This description sounds as much like Thomas Sutpen as it sounds unlike William Faulkner. Penetrated through and through by the history of his region and his family, Faulkner outran none of it, and he invented a rhetoric unequalled in its capacity to express penetrability, the phenomenon of

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[20] André Bleikasten has written of the relevance of Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia" (*Standard Edition*, XIV, 243–58) to Quentin's inability to sever his "narcissistic identification with the lost object" (*The Most Splendid Failure*, 116). In both of these accounts such identification is seen as a regressive and self–damaging move.

[21] Jim Swan, "Mater and Nannies: Freud's Two Mothers and the Discovery of the Oedipus Complex," *American Imago*, 31 (1974), 9–10.

being wounded. The biography and the representations in the fiction give us reason to construe him as damaged by his own mother, expelled too soon, not nourished enough.[22] But if this is so, the hunger it generated was for "chanting measures beyond the need for words," and the activity it inspired was an attempt to use words to get past the Symbolic itself, "to retrieve the plenitude of the origins," as André Bleikasten puts it, "by re–membering the . . . body of the lost, forgotten, and unforgettable mother."[23]

"There is at least one spot in every dream at which it is unplumbable," Freud writes in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, "a navel, as it were, that is its point of contact with the unknown."[24] Freud's project of male autonomy makes him insist upon mystery here, but it is possible to know what that navel connects us with. In his early dream–novels, where the experiments with language are greatest and the psychic wounds least concealed, where the mother is punished representationally and yet sought after rhetorically, Faulkner made that unsettling connection.

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[22] For biographical information/speculation, see David Minter, *William Faulkner: His Life and Work* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 1–23; and Jay Martin, "'The Whole Burden of Man's History of his Impossible Heart's Desire': The Early Life of William Faulkner," *American Literature*, 53 (1982), 607–29.

[23] Bleikasten, "In Praise of Helen," *Faulkner and Women: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha 1985*, ed. Doreen Fowler and Ann J. Abadie (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1986), 140.

[24] Freud, *Standard Edition*, IV, iii.

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Litotes and Chiasmus: Cloaking Tropes in *Absalom, Absalom!*

> *Yes, I stopped dead — no* woman's *hand, no* negro's *hand, but bitted bridle–curb to check and guide the furious and unbending will — I crying not to her, to it; speaking to it through the* negro, *the* woman... (*AA*, 139–140)
>
> Anse or love; love or Anse: it didn't matter... (*AILD*, 165)

The power of particular rhetorical figures in Faulkner's works is such that his readers have tended to group them somewhat indiscriminately under that one rubric, often speaking without distinction of the "Southern oratory" or "rhetorical cadences" of Faulkner's characters. Little effort has gone either into spotting characteristic tropes in different speakers' discourse or into actually determining which tropes are at issue or how they might differ or interact as indices of wider issues in Faulkner's stories and novels.[1] In this essay, I should like to make some tentative remarks on two intriguing devices commonly found in Faulkner's, and his characters', discourse: *chiasmus* (or A:B: :B:A figures) and *litotes* (double negation, or the *denial* of a *negative* state to conjure up the linguistic semblance of a *positive* one).

In many ways, tropes, like the literary texts they inform, are an odd mixture of the proper and the improper, the banal and the novel, the normal and the abnormal. In theory, "there is no structure incapable of becoming a figure," yet at the same time, "the fact that a use of language is uncommon does not justify our regarding it as a figure."[2] A figure would appear to have, at the very least: 1) a discernable structure or form, and 2), a use that is different (but not too different) from the normal manner of expression, and consequently, one that attracts a reader's or a listener's attention. A third condition for the working of figures is that — although they might, in the most extreme case, seem at first to have been solecisms, they must later be seen to have been anything but verbal clum-

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[1] A recent notable exception is Stephen M. Ross's article, "'Voice' in Narrative Texts: The Example of *As I Lay Dying*," *PMLA*, 94 (1979), 300–310.

[2] Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts–Tyeca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press. 1969), 169. French title: *La nouvelle rhétorique: traité de l'argumentation* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1958).

siness. In retrospect, the good rhetorician must be seen to have used language in a natural, yet crafty, way. Therefore, looking at and listening to the examples cited in the epigraph, it becomes clear that the first moment in the evaluation of the trope is the *reader's*: readers must be able to distinguish "common" from "uncommon" language, and derive from a meaningful series the extent to which a pattern of arrangement and conjunction might influence, even alter, the reception of the utterance.

In *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901), Freud takes up how a reader (or listener) is best to assess the slightly questionable patterns that erupt from a speaker's quotidian discourse. In his discussion of the *Fehlleistung*, or parapraxis, he indicates that linguistic deviations (such as the "slip of the tongue") often seem unintended, and "must be in the nature of a momentary and temporary disturbance ... If we perceive the parapraxis at all [in committing one], we must not be aware in ourselves of any motive for it."[3]

Alongside this statement, let us consider Longinus' dictum about the proper employment of rhetorical figures: "No figure is more excellent than the one which is entirely hidden, so that it is no longer recognized as a figure..."[4] The trope and the Freudian "slip", then, both inject something new, unexpected, even disturbing, into what Freud calls "the limits of the normal" — everyday speech and action. In the case of the trope, the speaker is aware that his or her utterance is extraordinary, but ideally the listeners are not; with the parapraxis, the audience is aware of the strangeness of what the speaker has said, but the speaker, presumably, is not. Longinus' "hidden" figures and Freud's "slips", especially when encountered repeatedly, suggest unspoken motives, even repressions, about which the first clues are their only partially perfected disguises.

My title, "Cloaking Tropes," describes both how figures serve to hide repressed material, and how they hide themselves so that, as Longinus says, they are "no longer recognized." The figures I am treating here are in no way ungrammatical or unsyntactical; they are not "failures" of language, because their speakers get their points across without interference. Yet it is perhaps superficial to simply ascribe them, as in Richard Poirier's comment that Miss Rosa's language evidences "neurotic self-absorption," to local causes, without determining whether their form reveals wider narrative tendencies.[5]

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[3] Sigmund Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (New York: Norton, 1960), 239. German title: *Zur Psychopathologie des Alltagsleben*.

[4] Longinus, *On the Sublime*, Chapter XV.

[5] Richard Poirier, "'Strange Gods' in Jefferson, Mississippi: An Analysis of *Absalom, Absalom!*", *Twentieth Century Interpretations of* Absalom, Absalom!, ed. Arnold Goldman (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice–Hall, 1971), 26.

The paradox of Freud's theory of repression is that forgetting and remembering take place in inevitable linkage. We repress drives that it would indeed be possible to satisfy, and forget what we should recall. For Freud, acting on or remembering certain drives or events can be "irreconcilable with other claims and intentions," and unkind to our ideal self-image.[6] Faulkner shows a trope-laden speech in several of his characters in *Absalom, Absalom!* particularly, even as these characters display ample motivation for the kind of repression which, as Freud says "lies simply in turning something away, and keeping it at a distance, from the conscious."[7] The phrase "turning something away" is in fact the etymological root of the word "trope," and it describes exactly the shape (and often, the function) of the chiasmus (A:B: :B:A).

The nature of the trope is to turn. Capable of mutually exclusive meanings without regard for truth–value, tropes are suitably equivocal agents for the repression of unwelcome histories and irrepressible drives. The forgetting that tropes engage, after all, is not complete, since they "remind me just as much of what I wanted to forget as of what I wanted to remember," and are finally "neither a complete success nor a complete failure... it is not even correct to suppose that repression withholds from the conscious *all* the derivatives of what was primally repressed..."[8] The Freudian insight that language can turn against its speaker by an ultimately profitable failure, might be of heuristic value when investigating tropes in Faulkner's works: "Repressions that have failed will of course have more claim on our interest than any that may have been successful; for the latter will for the most part escape our examination."[9]

Successful tropes, therefore, can be indications of failed cloakings. Perhaps the best image that Faulkner gives us to depict the unintentional revealing effects of devices meant to cloak comes in his description of Ellen Coldfield's futile facial powder:

> The powder was to hide the marks of tears. But before the wedding was over the powder was streaked, caked and channelled. Ellen seems to have entered the church ... out of weeping as though out of rain ... and then walked back out of the church and into the weeping again, the tears again, the same tears even, the same rain. (*AA*, 48-9)

Faulkner's account of how Ellen reacts to the unwelcome details of her wedding aligns well with Freud's account of how the mind receives nega-

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6 Freud, "Repression," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1953–74), XIV, 147. German title: "Die Verdrängung" (1915).

7 Freud, "Repression," 147.

8 Freud, *Psychopathology*, 4, and "Repression," 149.

9 Freud, "Repression," 153.

tive internal or external stimuli: either by — as in Ellen's case — the "turning back again" of chiasmus, or by what Freud calls *Verneinung*, and what Classical rhetoric called *litotes*, negation and denial of negative states to form an illusory positivity.[10] Yet in either case, the rhetorical "powder" will leave "marks" of the process whereby pain and desire have been repressed.

Chiasmus conflates two unequivalent tendencies: repetition and reversal. These are not homologous, for if the emphasis is on repetition, we might expect a static, even reactionary, fixation of initial terms ('A:B' is repeated in 'B:A'). If the emphasis is on reversal, however, there is the possibility for a radical disruption and overturning of the primary series. On a more basic level, it might be said that chiasmus, particularly in the case of *Absalom, Absalom!*, has serious implications for Faulkner's narrative structure, Quentin's understanding of the Sutpen story and Southern history, and for the reader's evaluation of race and gender relations in Yoknapatawpha County.

The course from A to B followed by a break and reverse transit from B to A, as an empty structure, can configure many possible kinds of movement: remembering and forgetting; hermetic reduplication; journey and return; foray and rebuff; twist and correction. Depending on whether the difference between A and B is defined in terms of effort, temporality, opposition, quality, or valuation, the 'A:B: :B:A' shape — by itself a merely neutral figure of theme, variation, and return — can express and engender wide variations of meaning, as in these examples from some of Faulkner's other works:

> ...from day to dark and dark to day again... (*LA*, 5)
> *He will have no more shame than to lie about being afraid, just as he had no more shame than to be afraid because he lied.* (*LA*, 407)
> I used to hold like this...I hold to use like this... (*SF*, 135)
> "Poor kid, you're just a girl...You're just a girl. Poor kid." (*SF*, 138)

In terms of narrative, the A:B: :B:A structure simulates the temporal preconditions of narration itself. The eyewitness reports the story in reverse, already knowing its ending, and reading the beginning in terms of the ending, yet still constrained to narrate from "front to back", or from 'A' to 'B'. There is a small–scale version of this movement in Faulkner's

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[10] I am indebted here to a passage in Jacques Lacan's *Ecrits*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock, 1977), 169. French title: *Ecrits I* (Paris: Seuil, 1966): "Periphrasis, hyperbaton, ellipsis, suspension, anticipation, retraction, negation, digression, irony, these are the figures of style (Quintilian's *figurae sententiarium*); as catachresis, litotes, antonomasia, hypotyposis are the tropes, whose terms suggest themselves as the most proper for the labelling of these mechanisms. Can one really see these as mere figures of speech when it is the figures themselves that are the active principle of the rhetoric of the discourse that the analysand in fact utters?"

frequent use of *hysteron proteron* ("last first" statements, or what Ilse Dusoir Lind has called his "effect cause" sequences), which often takes the form of answers before questions (as in Quentin's "It's because she wants it told"), results before causes, or premonitions before events (the anticipations of Charles Bon's death, for example) — all of which can generally be described as 'B:A' structures.[11] In narration as well, the narrated event (A) is usually to the witness (B) as the witness (B) is to his or her own act of telling it, the narrating event (A), a second kind of 'A:B: :B:A' reversal that narration, especially oral narration, entails.

Quentin seems somewhat naively to believe that Rosa's A:B: :B:A transmission of Sutpen's story will enable him to answer the question that Shreve in fact puts to him much later: "Why do you hate the South?" What she will tell him should, but does not finally, allow him to explain the trauma of the Confederate defeat to outsiders, to "people whom she will never see and whose names she will never hear and who have never heard her name nor seen her face" (*AA*, 11). Even this sentence, another chiasmus, reveals the reversible intersubjectivity of narration: "people...never see...names...never hear...never heard her name nor seen her face."

Yet if the A:B: :B:A structure can be dialogic, it is equally true that it can encourage the kind of monologue that closes off openness and possibility. Alongside the potential reversibility of position in chiasmus, we also can see the possibility of resistance to change. Though Rosa is both subject and object of "seeing" and "hearing" in the previous example, the "seeing" and "hearing" that would have allowed the presence of otherness does not actually take place ("... never heard her name nor seen her face..."). The resistance to change endemic in Quentin's cultural environment is perfectly described in the early chiasmus that describes him as "filled with stubborn back-looking ghosts still recovering...looking with stubborn recalcitrance backward..." (*AA*, 12).

In general, if 'A...B...C...D' describes development of plot, then 'A:B: :B:A' constitutes not narration, but myth, a rejection of plot "twists and turns" in favor of the repetition of what "everyone knows" already. Following the lines of transmission of the Sutpen story, we can see that the kind of exact transmission from "event" to "audience" that the 'A:B: :B:A' structure promises never quite materializes in *Absalom, Absalom!*. Ideally, the oral transmission of the Sutpen story to Shreve would have involved a chain of perfectly replicating 'A:B: :B:A' conversations in which teller and listener, subject and object, smoothly reverse roles. Towards the end

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[11] Ilse Dusoir Lind, "The Design and Meaning of *Absalom, Absalom!*," *William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism*, ed. Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1960), 289.

of these reversing narrative events, the credibility of the transmission has become disturbingly dubious: Sutpen:Rosa: :Rosa:Quentin: :Quentin:Shreve; or Sutpen:General Compson: :General Compson:Mr Compson: :Mr Compson:Quentin: :Quentin:Shreve. Quentin expresses this chain less schematically, in a well-wrought chiasmus of his own: "*Maybe it took father and me both to make Shreve or Shreve and me both to make father...*" (*AA*, 262) — each link is important for the fixed replication of the other links. But finally, and fatally for any sense of exact transmission, Shreve decides not to *remake*, but to *unmake* the Sutpen myth's means of transmission.

The symmetry of present and past, mimicked in the chiasmus shape, seems indeed to founder precisely at that midpoint where the search for past truth should rest. As we have learned, the midpoint which should be supporting the chiasmus' adequation of past to present, event to myth, actually undermines it, because it designates the place where things have been kept silent and repressed, fateful issues such as death, defeat, and racial, class, and gender inequities. Where the midpoint is revealed as an emptiness, or worse, an illusion, the subterfuge fails. Instead of a smoothly mimeographed reversal print, reconfirming the accuracy of the original, Quentin is suspended between the initial version ('A:B') and its failed repetition ('B:A'). The hermetic rubrics which have long described Southern racial and political history are now coming apart. Bereft of any more comforting substitutes for these mythic screens — in which a fantasy–like *Nachkonstruktion* has masqueraded as *Voraussetzung*, or original fact — Quentin resorts to litotes, frantically negating the negative truth: "*I dont hate it! I dont hate it!*"

Despite all of its hermetic and reactionary qualities, the 'A:B :B:A' structure may also depict by a radical turn the place where fixed racial, class, and gender roles are compromised, and where alert observers may note that certain verities are about to change. Faulkner may have borrowed his use of the chiasmus and litotes from his (or his characters') use of figures found in the King James Version of the Bible — a sort of highly figured 16th century style whose echoes are retained by many Southern speakers. One of the most interesting examples of chiasmus in the Bible itself is a clear statement of social revaluation: "*protoi eschatoi kai eschatoi protoi*" ("the first shall be last, and the last first" — Matthew 19:30). Both social boundaries and the boundaries of the ego, under linguistic management, may seem increasingly dubious, as shown in the polymorphous possibilities of the Bon/Henry/Judith triangle, in which it is difficult to tell who is seducing whom. Separating the "I" from the "not–I" (to borrow Darl Bundren's language in *As I Lay Dying*) is not always easy, and one of the most unflattering ideas that Faulkner's chiasmus figures suggest is that human relationships entail a high degree of inter-

changeability.

Once more, let me stress that these figures would not be as obvious if they actually achieved their users' intended aim: reversing time, maintaining mythologies of the past, fixing and guaranteeing various societal roles and rankings. In fact, however, these tropes ultimately undermine their speakers' credibility. Perhaps Rosa's rhetoric is, as one critic says, "persuasively incantatory", but few who hear her — either her immediate or her more remote auditors — are completely convinced.[12] Sutpen also undermines his own design, choosing as its shape a chiasmus–like reversal of history, as Rosa suggests: "*...as though in the restoration of that ring to a living finger he had turned all the time back twenty years and stopped it, froze it*" (*AA*, 165). Sutpen's design may well be "self-destructive", but the figure upon which he bases that design is, fatally for him, self-deconstructive.[13] Yet Sutpen's wish to reverse time simply repeats the typical behavior of all the major actors in *Absalom, Absalom!*: the wish to confirm a myth of the past ('A:B') brings them face–to–face with something disturbingly "other," something that causes the final story ('B:A') always to differ from the hoped–for version.

The abrupt insinuations of opposition, reality, even what Freud calls "unpleasure" into the lives and stories of Rosa, Sutpen, Henry, and Quentin all take place as failed reversals whose "fractured" chiasmus may be seen as the rhetorical keystone of *Absalom, Absalom!*'s narrative architecture. The attempted, or the broken 'A:B: :B:A' structure repeats in the novel on the sentence, paragraph, and chapter levels. There are four major incidents in *Absalom, Absalom!* in which characters encounter "turns" of phrase and of fate, and each scene involves four stages: 1) a search to confirm an ideal or dream; 2) a rebuff and/or insult to that ideal or dream; 3) the reaction, which is not an acknowledgement but a litotes–like negation of the negative rebuff; and 4) a chiasmus–like return from the place of revelation, portrayed as a reversed repetition of the initial search.

In the first example, Miss Rosa ascends the staircase to see Bon and must confront Clytie's rebuff: "*Dont you go up there, Rosa*" (*AA*, 138). The reality of a presumably subservient black woman giving her orders ("*the black arresting and untimorous hand on my white woman's flesh*"; *AA*, 139), as well as the probable reality that Bon is already dead is too much for Miss Rosa, and denial sets in: "*Because it was not the name, the word, the fact that she had called me Rosa*" (*AA*, 139); and recall the epigraph to this paper: "*...no woman's hand, no negro's hand*" (*AA*, 139).

The second example shows Sutpen at the front door of the mansion,

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[12] Poirier, 26.

[13] Richard P. Adams, *Faulkner: Myth and Motion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 165.

trying to deliver a message, meeting the rebuff of the black servant. Again, the racial nature of Sutpen's rebuff by a black is unpalatable and undeniable, yet he denies it: "...because they (the niggers) were not it, not what you wanted to hit..." (*AA*, 230). Yet if this assertion were true, how does one account for the description immediately thereafter of a black person being whipped? Sutpen returns from the scene of his rejection in a "retrograde" description, "...like when you pass through a room fast and look at all the objects in it and you turn and go back through the room again and look at all the objects from the other side..." (*AA*, 230), still denying the facts of the experience: "...he never even remembered what the nigger said..." (*AA*, 232).

The third example comes when Henry Sutpen walks to his father's tent (not incidentally, amidst an entire Confederate Army "marching backwards" after the rebuff of a military defeat). He hears the unwelcome facts his father has to tell him, denies them, and returns in an exactly retrograde sequence. Going in, he passes "*a road rutted and cut,*" "*the silhouette of a sentry*", and "*stoops through the entrance*" (*AA*, 352–53). After Sutpen's revelations about Bon's black parenthood, we read a reversed description of him leaving the tent: "*He remembers stooping through the entrance again, and passing the sentry again, he remembers walking back down the cut and rutted road...*" (*AA*, 355). Yet he denies forgetting his response to that revelation, even though we never find out what that response was: "*Nor did Henry ever say that he did not remember...*" (*AA*, 355).

In the fourth example, Miss Rosa goes up the staircase of the old mansion, now a virtual ruin, and abruptly comes down again. Quentin, investigating the source of the abrupt return, also goes upstairs, and confronts the undeniable reality that Henry is still alive. Once more, their conversation is a chiasmus, and the broadly metaphysical point beyond which neither Quentin nor Henry can go is the negative hinge of that italicized chiasmus, the words "*to die.*"

In summary, chiasmus and litotes in Faulkner's texts are alternative and often complementary ways of dealing with different sources of undesirable facts. The chiasmus would at all costs conceal its gaps by repeatedly cloaking reality with added–on, palatable images or mythologies. Yet, as the chiasmus often constitutes a kind of split (not unlike what Freud elsewhere describes as a psychic *Spaltung*, or "splitting") — defined as the difference between accepting and negating tabooed drives and negative memories — its users often must bring another trope into play. The other trope, litotes, does not ignore the *Spaltung* in the representation of reality, but allows it into consciousness only on the assumption that it will

appear along with its own negation or denial. Litotes, like Freud's notion of *Verneinung* (found in the 1925 essay "Negation"), is "a suspension of the repression, but not an acceptance of the repressed" — a substitute formulation of what cannot be completely cloaked.[14]

Whereas chiasmus has as its major motive changing minor but insignificant details about the past, litotes seems to be best at acknowledging ineluctable social categories (living/dead; man/woman; black/white) while at the same time asserting their nullity. Freud says as much when, in contrasting repression and negation, he suggests that repression (chiasmus in Faulkner) protects against internal, instinctive, or psychological impulses, while negation (litotes in Faulkner) fights back external threats and social disruptions that are economic, racial, sexual, or historical in nature.[15] Examples where characters deny negative states by using negation abound: Rosa, one of the "undead," still has an "implacable reserve of undefeat" (*AA*, 11). Addie is "no longer unvirgin" (*AILD*, 165), and in *Go Down, Moses*, Ike can still dream of "unaxed" woods (*GDM*, 193).

Frequently, both tropes coincide, as if the individual, in trying to reconstruct a presentable version of the past, returns for a reasonable facsimile of what occurred. Yet this facsimile has "nots," which are explicated, not by their removal, but by adding negative suffixes/prefixes to them as they occur. In ignoring the gaps that these "nots" (even these now negated "nots") cause, the anguished mind can still return to the present, completing the 'A:B: :B:A' structure, but the deception overlooks the fact that the pivotal elements of this "perfect" research into the past are not positive affirmations, but negated negations.

There is a fascinating homology between repression's itinerary of search, rebuff, and return, and the sequence of quest, *anagnorisis*, and *peripeteia* that fuels Greek tragic drama (with the Greek chorus literally tracing out a chiasmus figure, promenading, reversing, and then turning again, chanting strophe and antistrophe). But for Faulkner's characters, the *anagnorisis* remains incomplete: moments of unveiling become moments of cloaking; scenes of recognition become scenes of denial.

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[14] Freud, "Negation," *Standard Edition*, XIX. German title: "Die Verneinung," in *Sigmund Freud: Studienausgabe*. III (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 1975), 373; my translation.

[15] Freud, *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis* (New York: Norton, 1969), 60–1. German title: *Abriss der Psychoanalyse* (1940).

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Some Remarks on Negation and Denegation in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*

In a 1925 text, "Die Verneinung,"[1] Freud writes that the patient who asserts: This is not my mother, indeed means that this *is* his mother. The analyst must divert his eyes ("absehen") from the negation itself to retain only the content of the utterance, as a representation or thought can make its way to consciousness provided it lets itself be denied. So a negative statement allows the analyst to have access to what has been repressed: the negation lifts the repression, yet without acceptance of the repressed material.

In a linguist's commentary upon this text, Emile Benveniste explains that what characterizes the linguistic negation is the fact that it cannot nullify what is being uttered, as it must explicitly posit what it denies.[2] So primarily, if not logically, a negation should be read or heard as an acknowledgement, since the denied content is *formally* present in discourse. Negation cannot abolish the fundamental property of language which implies that something — and not nothing — corresponds to what is being uttered. Thus *no* is clearly and (in)directly a referential index.

In Freud, the significance of negation must be understood by reference to the game of the child playing with a spool, making the object appear and disappear — the *fort/da* game, which originates in the economical pleasure/displeasure principle. The child constitutes the object as something which can be here (*da*) and not here (*fort*); in other words, the object has the faculty of disappearing, but not that of not being. Linguistically, it follows that the negation is a constituent of the content which is denied: the constitution of an object implies the possibility of losing it; the virtuality of loss, or absence, is present in the actual object. Such virtuality is represented in discourse by the grammatical negation. Thus negativity can be seen as the unconscious of discourse – unconscious, but existing as a constituent.

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1 Sigmund Freud, *Gesammelte Werke* (London: Imago Publishing Company, 1940–52), XIV, 11–15.

2 *Problèmes de linguistique générale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 84–5.

An analogy taken from painting will bring some light on this point from another angle. Cézanne or Picasso, or the late Monet, do not so much make us see a given representation as they make us see what seeing is. They show how a representation hollows itself out, so to speak, elides itself in fragmentation and deconstruction. Thus the picture becomes an object showing its own constituting process, and there is nothing to be seen without that separation, that hiatus, between the subject who sees and the object. Similarly, one might posit that discourse constitutes itself in its own negativity, that negativity produces less a specific representation than the operation of discourse itself: there is nothing to be said in discourse without negativity.

Faulkner's fiction often writes itself in the negative mode. This is particularly visible in two novels written, as it were, within one another, *Pylon* and *Absalom, Absalom!*. It is true that Faulkner repeatedly uses, and abuses, such negative abstractions as "profoundless" or "meaningless," and that he constantly resorts to negative words and phrases. He had learned from Melville and Conrad that negation is not the reverse of affirmation, since it also affirms what it denies, and that by making use of it the writer has the best of the two modes (somewhat similar remarks could be made about oxymorons, also generously used by Faulkner).

In *Pylon*, the use of negation expresses the attempt at creating an incredible, impossible character–narrator, nameless as he should be, the Reporter, in his turn "trying to say" (to use a phrase so often applied by Faulkner to his incapacitated narrators, to begin with Benjy, of course) — and failing precisely at saying, at telling the truth of those unattainable aviators, rootless, "ephemera and phenomena on the face of a contemporary scene" (*FU*, 36). *Pylon* was written as a way out of the impasse Faulkner had reached in *Absalom, Absalom!* in trying to make his narrators tell Sutpen's story from such elusive evidence as rumors, the ruins of a burnt–down plantation house or the fading inscriptions on vanishing tombstones, so that the narrators must ultimately be the *inventors* of the truth they tell, and the narratives themselves create their own "reality" within the space of fiction. Faulkner then had to set aside *Absalom, Absalom!* and he started writing *Pylon*, in part as an attempt to solve his narrative problems.[3] Such a narrative quandary may account for the incredible recurrence of negations in *Pylon*, the novel written within the other one, at the time of the impasse. Admittedly, this linguistic strategy can verge on mannerism, creating an unreal or surreal atmosphere in which the lan-

[3] On the composition of *Pylon* and *Absalom, Absalom!*, see Joseph Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 1974) 828–30, 865–75, 884–5, 887–98, 900, 904–7, 924–5.

guage superbly stages and designates its own impotence. The too great visibility of language may then appear as detrimental to the novel's imaginative power.

Such is not the case with *Absalom, Absalom!*, the writing of which was resumed just after the publication of *Pylon*, and then successfully completed within a few months. The use of negation proper is far less visible in the later novel. But as the narrative here is assumed by the four narrators and by the anonymous narrator who comments upon the narrative process or situation, Faulkner also resorts, more so than in *Pylon*, to denegation (unlike *Absalom, Absalom!*, *Pylon* is told mostly in the third person by the anonymous narrator).[4] Negation and denegation then function as referential indexes, create their own references, precisely in narratives founded on the absence of outside reference: thus they become constituents of the very design of the novel.

My remarks on *Absalom, Absalom!*, unsystematic and rather prospective, will be based on some examples taken from the narratives of the two major narrators, Rosa Coldfield and Quentin Compson.

Shut in the coffin–smelling gloom of her dead and dusty house, tetanized in unforgiving for forty–three years, rigid with impotence and indomitableness, Rosa Coldfield conceives of the characters she evokes in the negative mode, denying them life while acknowledging their existence to justify her own death–in–life. The first tableau evoked by her narrative, in the second paragraph of the novel, shows Sutpen and his wild negroes "immobile" "in bloodless paradox" (*AA*, 8). Ellen appears as "a Niobe without tears," "who even while alive had moved but without life and grieved but without weeping," with an air of "unwitting desolation," existing in a "lifeless decorum," "as if she had never lived at all" (*AA*, 13–4).

In Rosa's narrative, the "contradictory and bizarre" (*AA*, 14) appearance of the characters, often expressed in the negative or oxymoronic modes, is meant to be an index to the destructive power of Sutpen: designated as "the evil's source and head" (*AA*, 18), ultimately the only object of her resentment (to paraphrase Racine), he is really the one character on whom she exerts her power of negation and denegation. From the first paragraph of the novel, he is seen as "nothusband," in one word which evokes not non–existence, but the presence of an absence, of a want — the more present for being perceived as the negative of a husband, which he is forever as she had agreed to marry him and had then turned away in out-

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[4] The two terms, negation and denegation, are not interchangeable. Negation is a grammatical or linguistic concept, denegation is at once linguistic and psychological. Negation concerns the utterance, what is formally expressed — the product — whereas denegation refers to the uttering agency, the speaker – the production.

rage. This in turn makes her into a "notwife," a condition she intellectually knows to be true, but that she cannot emotionally accept. The word "nothusband" thus expresses the duality of her attitude, telling at once the repression and the lifting of it.

Sutpen often appears in her narrative in the negative mode: immobilized, "quiet inattentive and harmless," existing in "bloodless paradox" (*AA*, 8), a ghost enclosed "in its aura of unregeneration," "impervious to fatigue" (*AA*, 13). But he must remain in that negative condition in which he is rendered harmless and she can retain her dominion over him, so that she can forever hate him and keep alive "her impotent yet indomitable frustration" (*AA*, 7). That is why she cannot accept his death: "*Dead? You? You lie; you're not dead; heaven cannot, and hell dare not, have you!*" (*AA*, 172). This is to her an unthinkable possibility, because it would destroy the delicate balance in the relationship between the nothusband and the notwife. The death of one implies the death of the other, as the absent presence would no longer be nothusband, but nothing, and she would thus be reduced to nothingness. It is significant that she immediately "resurrects" Sutpen in the form of another "ghost" inhabiting Sutpen's Hundred (at the end of chapter 5). And indeed she dies soon after the fire has destroyed the house and the last avatar of its ghost.

"He wasn't a gentleman. He wasn't even a gentleman" (*AA*, 14). This is how Rosa Coldfield begins her narrative proper. The intensifier *even*, pointing so to speak to the powerlessness of the negation to deny its object, is clearly an index to the gap between the intellectual and the emotional stance of the narrator. No, Sutpen isn't a gentleman since he has outraged her. Yet, in a lifting of the repression, she admits in spite of herself that he is indeed a gentleman. If he were not, then she would not be a lady; and the gist of her further denegations in the rest of her narrative aims precisely at demonstrating that she is a lady, that she could not prevent the outrage, since it was decreed that the "fatality and curse on [her] family" and on the whole Southern land should be "performed and discharged to the last drop and dreg" (*AA*, 21). Yet Sutpen is not a gentleman, not even a gentleman, and then one is led to suspect that the notwife might not be a lady, as is intimated by her acknowledgement of sexual desire in her vicarious (re)creation of Charles Bon's courtship and by the surprising recurrence of erotic imagery in that recreation (*AA*, 143–9). She becomes, in her incredibly turgid language, "*all polymath love's androgynous advocate*" (*AA*, 146), and she confesses to being betrayed by the "incorrigible flesh" to what she calls the "*deluded sewer–gush of dreaming*" (*AA*, 163). Yet again, Sutpen is a gentleman, and much more than a gentleman: she will admit that he has "the stature and

shape of a hero" (*AA*, 19),[5] and she later recognizes the Promethean aspect of his design, making him into a demiurge, God himself: in Quentin's vision of him as he hears Miss Rosa, Sutpen appears "creating the Sutpen's Hundred, the *Be Sutpen's Hundred* like the oldentime *Be Light*" (*AA*, 9).

Rosa Coldfield's whole narrative, in chapters 1 and 5, is informed by her rhetoric of denegation: "I hold no brief for Ellen," "I hold no brief for myself," "I dont plead youth," "I dont plead propinquity ... material necessity," "I do not plead myself," "I claim no brief, no pity," "what there could have been between a man like that and papa" (an implied denegation). She holds no brief, yet she does nothing else. She pleads, even resorting to the legal terms, to exonerate Ellen and, mostly, herself (the denegation significantly shifts from Ellen to herself), from any responsibility for having married him, in Ellen's case, and for having agreed to marry him, in her case. That is why she makes him into an invisible force, at once subhuman (a beast, covered with fur, surrounded by his wild negroes) and superhuman (a devil and a fiend, Hades releasing Persephone for "a dispensation of one day only" [*AA*, 23], the God-ordained agent of "fatality and curse on [her] family" [*AA*, 21]). So it is precisely the rhetoric of denegation which engineers the change from notgentleman to hero to god of the nether world to demiurge to God himself — a denegation often reinforced by the use of "even."

This strategy of negation and denegation in Rosa Coldfield's narrative originates in a denial of unacceptable reality. "*There are some things which happen to us,*" she explains, "*which the intelligence and the senses refuse*" (*AA*, 151). She must then create her own reality, which she calls truth: an imaginary and coherent "*might–have–been which is more true than truth*" (*AA*, 143), "*that might–have–been which is the single rock we cling to above the maelstrom of unbearable reality*" (*AA*, 149–50). So negation and denegation open up the door to imaginative (re)creation and make Rosa a dreamer of truth — her own truth — just like Sutpen, whose design originated in the denial of a denial. He had been refused access through the front door of the large planter's house — not just a denial of access, but a denial of his own self — a situation which he had in turn to deny if he were to exist at all in his own eyes. Hence the escape into the imaginative world of his design, which eventually, precisely when it is denied by History, Rosa Coldfield identifies as the dream of "*a madman who creates within his very coffin walls his fabulous immeasurable Camelots and Carcassonnes*" (*AA*, 160). The allusion to "Carcas-

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5 "Despite what he might have been at one time and despite what she might have believed or even known about him, [he] had fought for four honorable years for the soil and traditions of the land" (*AA*, 19): here, the implied negative allows her to let the truth out.

sonne," the short story in which the poet's denial of reality opens up the "*high heaven of the world,*" to which he rides on a too obviously symbolical pony "*with a mane like tangled fire*" (*CS*, 895), clearly signals the relationship between negation and creation. Rosa Coldfield can recognize in Sutpen that power of denial which makes dreamers and creators of their own truth, because she is no different: that is, profoundly, the reason why she agrees to marry him. Yet she must deny precisely that she has agreed of her own will, as is shown by her rhetoric of denegation, lest she should come to acknowledge that her whole attitude of denial and impotent rage for forty–three years had been meaningless.

Unlike Rosa Coldfield and Quentin Compson, Mr. Compson is not personally committed as a narrator. He does not have to hold his own brief, to exonerate himself from having succumbed to the power of the object of his narrative. And he evinces no reluctance to engage in his narrative, he does not have to be urged along: Quentin does not fulfill with his father the function Shreve does with Quentin. Whereas Rosa Coldfield, too close, is tetanized in her outrage, and whereas Quentin painfully comes to identify with Henry and Bon, Mr. Compson's stance is distant and even contemptuous: so he does not have to approach his subject negatively. His narrative makes a lesser use of negation and denegation, but a much larger use of modalizers: "doubtless," "possibly," "apparently," "maybe," "I would like to think," etc.; and also a much larger use of comparisons, extended similes, and metaphors. Both linguistic strategies alter the subject/object relationship: no longer direct and immediate (or relatively so), it becomes mediated, oblique, and even loose, through dis–placement. Thus, Mr. Compson comes to admit his failure to reach his object or to rationalize it: "It's just incredible. It just does not explain. Or perhaps that's it: they dont explain and we are not supposed to know" (*AA*, 100). "Something is missing" (*AA*, 101), he adds. What is missing in his case may be seen as his faculty for negation and denegation, the lack of which limits his creative power. To make a somewhat sweeping generalization, Mr. Compson's narrative proves *e contrario* that negation at once opens up unlimited possibilities in language by reaching to the "might–have–been" and ultimately allows the working of the fictionalizing process itself, superbly achieved with Rosa's narrative, and even more with Quentin's: their narratives demonstrate the relationship between the power to deny and the power to create.

"Breathing the same air ... which [Sutpen] himself had breathed" (*AA*, 11), Quentin is forced to absorb within himself an unacceptable Southern heritage. His is therefore a schizoid condition, as his self is divided between the 1909 student "preparing for Harvard in the South" (*AA*, 9) and the ghost he has become by harboring so many outraged ghosts, by becom-

ing "an empty hall" full of ghosts, a "commonwealth" of ghosts (*AA*, 12). He cannot constitute himself as a being, since the negation which might bring him to do so is no external condition, but has become an internal division. Consequently, he is reduced to the status of "notpeople," speaking in "notlanguage" (*AA*, 9), not even listening, as listening "renege[s] and hearing–sense self–confound[s]" (*AA*, 7). So, with Quentin, it appears that the concept of negation should not be taken merely in its linguistic acceptation, but also as a modality of being.

The second part of *Absalom, Absalom!* is framed by Mr. Compson's letter, a letter informed precisely by negation, in its two halves ("*I do not know it*," "*I do not know that either*," "*It can harm no one to believe*," "*It will do no harm to hope*" [*AA*, 174, 377]). There is no narrative reason to interrupt this letter in mid–sentence and resume it two hundred pages later, and to fit the whole Harvardian sequence of the novel between its two edges, as if the creased sheet of paper enclosed the whole narrative. The reason can only be poetic; that is, the letter points to, and is consistent with, the state of mind in which Quentin begins his long, painful journey into the night of Southern guilt — a manner of auto–analysis undergone reluctantly, with Shreve as analyst.

Quentin's physical appearance is also symptomatic of his state of mind: he is seen as sullen, bemused, brooding, with a downcast face, and speaking in a curious, dead voice, and he repeatedly tells himself that he has heard too much, too long (*AA*, 193, 207, 211).

His undertaking begins with the memory of his journey to Sutpen's Hundred. Then the landscape appears exhausted or dead, "oxygenless," and the dustcloud enclosing him delivers a negative message: "*you will find no destination but will merely abrupt gently onto a plateau and a panorama of harmless and inscrutable night and there will be nothing for you to do but return*" (*AA*, 175).

In the course of the night, Quentin has to be urged on by Shreve: "*Tell about the South. What's it like there. What do they do there. Why do they live there. Why do they live at all*" (*AA*, 174). Despite appearances, a close look at the narration reveals that Shreve is indeed the major narrative agency (even though the ultimate agency is of course Quentin, who must have told his co–narrator what he knew; but in the narration proper, Shreve retains the initiative, and he is the main narrator in chapters 6 and 8). Rather than talking, Quentin is given to brooding over a narrative which he hears without listening, as he had done with Rosa Coldfield, and with Mr. Compson: "[H]e walked out of his father's talking at last because it was now time to go, not because he had heard it all because he had not been listening, since he had something which he still was unable to pass: that door ..." (*AA*, 174). He can no more pass that door in the

order of the narration than Sutpen could pass the planter's door in the order of the story. Yet pass it he does in the end, entering that "last door" (*AA*, 237), that of Henry's bedroom. Quentin has at last fathomed the nature of Sutpen's innocence, itself a negative concept ("in–nocere," not–to harm), which denies what it seems to say, as Sutpen is no more innocent than the whole South. And Quentin can no longer deny the incontrovertible evidence, cannot say no to the unbearable reality of which he is indeed the inventor.

So his denial cannot be directed at reality (that is, reality in fiction), nor at himself as a narrator, but at himself as a person, as a character in this fiction. In the last chapter, he identifies with the dying Henry, to the point of reproducing his position and physically experiencing his exhaustion. Deprived of peace for evermore, echoing Poe's Raven, an image of the writer's inner division, he can only say: "I dont hate it,"[6] which means that he *also* hates it and hates himself for being part of it. He thus acknowledges the division in himself, that schizoid condition, that hiatus within the self, of which he was already aware at the start of the novel, when listening to Rosa Coldfield. But here again, as with Rosa, it is this inner division — expressed in negation and denegation — which makes him the creator he is, the inventor of the truth about Sutpen.

The phrase which best exemplifies Faulkner's endeavor as an artist is the one he used to define his most cherished novel, *The Sound and the Fury*: "splendid failure." The necessary gap between the dream and its realization must be at once asserted and denied, which is done by the conjunction of these two words (the term failure being implicitly negative). The achieved work is indeed a denegation of the artist by his dream. That is why the splendid dream is approached negatively, failingly — the only way to try to overcome the distance. Approached assertively, the dream forever recedes like an unattainable mirage. With the stratagems of negation and denegation, it can be tamed and the failure proclaimed splendid, an oxymoron in which the term splendid must come first — and not just because of grammar, which Faulkner would have jostled anyway.

In Faulkner's fiction, and particularly in what may be his most representative novel in this respect, *Absalom, Absalom!*, saying *no* is not just — not even — a matter of grammar: it is the artist's way of saying no to death, of arresting motion and life by artificial means (those the artist has at his disposal), so that it will move again, since it is life.[7] Negation is thus the way to the illimitability of language, to creation — to im–mortality.

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[6] Eighteen years later, the ending of the essay "Mississippi" strikes a slightly different note: even though the meaning *seems* to be the same, it is an affirmative ending.

[7] This is a well–known passage from the *Paris Review* interview, in *LG*, 253.

Winfried Herget (Mainz)

The Poetics of Negation in Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*

The concept of negation originates in the human mind. There are no negatives in nature. Kenneth Burke[1] has repeatedly reminded us that the principle of negativity helps to define man as a being which is capable of language. In this definition, man is not only a symbol–using animal but he is also the inventor of the negative.[2] The negative makes the essential distinction between the nonverbal and the verbal possible,[3] the distinction between *res* and *verba*.

Negation is a peculiarly linguistic resource whose potential is virtually unlimited. In Burke's words, "you can go on forever saying what a thing is *not*."[4] Any positive statement may be set off against innumerable negations stating what the same referent is not. Yet, as Bergson has convincingly argued,[5] in order to make sense, such negations have to be related to some expectancy. In a communicative act they have to be interpreted in terms of the underlying expectations — the implicit assumptions — on

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1 Kenneth Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966); Kenneth Burke, *The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology* (1961; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970). Basic to the following considerations of negation is also Henri Bergson, *L'évolution créatrice*, soixante–dix–septième édition (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1948). In addition, I have profited from: *Positionen der Negativität*, ed. Harald Weinrich, Poetik und Hermeneutik VI (München: Fink, 1975), particularly Karlheinz Stierle, "Der Gebrauch der Negation in fiktionalen Texten," 235–262, Dieter Wellershoff, "Die Verneinung als Kategorie des Werdens," 219–233, Niklas Luhmann, "Über die Funktion der Negation in sinnkonstituierenden Systemen," 201–218, Siegfried J. Schmidt, "Negation und Metasprache," 452–455; James L. Calderwood, *To Be and Not To Be: Negation and Metadrama in "Hamlet"* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); Hugo Friedrich, *Die Struktur der modernen Lyrik: Von der Mitte des neunzehnten bis zur Mitte des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts*, Erweiterte Neuausgabe (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1967); Klaus Martens, *Negation, Negativität und Utopie im Werk von Wallace Stevens*, Neue Studien zur Anglistik und Amerikanistik 17 (Frankfurt: Lang, 1980) Except for occasional remarks in Faulkner scholarship, only one, linguistically oriented, article is solely devoted to the question of negation: Hiroshi Hayakawa, "Negation in William Faulkner," *Studies in English Grammar and Linguistics: A Miscellany in Honor of Takanobu Otsuka*, ed. Kazuo Araik et al. (Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1958), 103–113.

2 Burke, *Rhetoric*, 40; Burke, *Symbolic Action*, 9.

3 Burke, *Symbolic Action*, 420.

4 Burke, *Rhetoric*, 19.

5 Bergson, 275–298 ("L'existence et le néant"); Burke, *Symbolic Action*, 420; Stierle, "Der Gebrauch der Negation," 241–243.

the part of the speaker/writer, or in terms of what the listener/reader is presupposed to expect. To state that something is not the case thus raises the question why it could or should be expected to be so. Following Jakobson's scheme,[6] negation should therefore be analyzed as to its emotive and conative — and not so much as regards its referential — function.

Within a text a negation as an expression of unfulfilled expectations can be used as a means of foregrounding which calls attention to the interplay of norms and deviations, and adds the dimension of "might be" or "should be" to that which is said not to be. Beyond the discourse which can be assigned to individual characters, the negations of the fictional text also give evidence of the presuppositions and prejudices of the cultural context in which they operate.

William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* is a case in point, not only as a significant example of a modernist poetics of negation but also because the novel is conceived as a series of speech acts in which the expectations and frustrations of the fictional characters come to the foreground. Rosa Coldfield is most obviously characterized by way of negation. Her use of negatives is expressive of unfulfilled expectations; it is justified by the possibilities of an irrevocable past. Rosa's language is marked by frustration, and each negation, instead of unburdening her, entangles her further in past experiences. By denying certain hopes, fears, and intentions, she is compelled to acknowledge them. Taken as a strategy of evasion, her negations can be interpreted in light of Freud's observation that negation serves to express the suppressed.[7] Furthermore, in the process of accumulating negations, imagination and language tend to turn upon themselves. The way in which experience is made up in the telling assumes a greater significance than the actual experience it refers to may have had. This effect is not at all restricted to individual characters such as Rosa Coldfield, but it is extended to the fictionalizing process itself, particularly in the last section of the novel, when Quentin and Shreve take over as fabulators. It is in these sections especially that negations are coextensive with the conjectural *perhaps* or *maybe*, and that the negative conditional (*would not*) is used frequently.

As a phenomenon of language, negation constitutes a paradox: in words something comes into existence by the assertion of its non–existence, something becomes a mental presence by the linguistic act which posits its absence. On the surface of the text, negations may become manifest in various forms and combinations: by mere negative affixation (*un–*, *–less*),

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6 Roman Jakobson, "Linguistics and Poetics," *Style in Language*, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1960), 350–377; Stierle, "Der Gebrauch der Negation," 243.

7 Sigmund Freud, *Gesammelte Werke Chronologisch Geordnet. Vierzehnter Band: Werke aus den Jahren 1925–1931*, 5th edition (1948; Frankfurt: Fischer, 1972), 11–15.

by prepositional phrases (*without . . .*), or by negative predication. They can take the form of propositional negatives or of hortatory negatives (the "Thou shalt not . . ." commandments). They can negate whole sentences, some elements, or parts of a complex syntactical structure. Correlations of varying degrees of comparative difference from total to partial opposition or contradiction can thus be expressed. Among the numerous possibilities, constructions of the type "*not only . . . but*" and "*not . . . but*" are most prominent. In these cases, the negation of the first part necessitates an augmentation or emendation in the second part.[8] Correlations can also be established on a paradigmatic axis, either symmetrically (*dead/alive*) or asymmetrically (*red/not red*).[9]

Absalom, Absalom! abounds in examples of these types of negations. What is remarkable is the density in which they occur and the way the author intricately links the various types. In addition, Faulkner creates his own negative neologisms; already on the first pages of the novel, the reader is struck by coinages such as "nothusband" (*AA*, 7), "unamaze" (*AA*, 8), "notpeople" (*AA*, 9), "notlanguage" (*AA*, 9), "undefeat" (*AA*, 11), "unregeneration" (*AA*, 13), and "unregret" (*AA*, 14).

Faulkner is particularly fond of asymmetrical negations which leave open an unspecified number of affirmative possibilities. Rosa's "He wasn't a gentleman. He wasn't even a gentleman" (*AA*, 14) only states what Sutpen was not, what he could not be called, but it does not allow any definition of what he was, of what he could or should be called. The affirmative propositional content of the utterance cannot be determined by simply reverting the negation. The negative proposition asserts that something is not — even though it could be expected to be — but its possible affirmative content remains ambivalent. In *Absalom, Absalom!* Faulkner makes wide use of such asymmetrical negations even where a symmetrical relationship could be expected, where it is provided by the language system. Even in such cases he frequently coins his own negative term which leaves the positive complement indeterminate. Examples like *defeat — undefeat* (instead of *victory*) come readily to mind. The strategy culminates in the negative proposition which concludes the novel. The repetitive "*I dont hate it*" (*AA*, 378) does not allow the conclusion that Quentin loves the South (the symmetrical relationship of *hate – love*) but rather expresses the tension the young Southerner has to bear.

Negations then reveal how tenuous the relationship between language and experience is. In the affirmative–negative continuum which is meant

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[8] Hayakawa, 111 f.; Hayakawa also lists examples of various forms of negations in Faulkner's other works.

[9] For a short discussion of the dichotomy see Karlheinz Stierle, "Partielle und asymmetrische Negationen," *Positionen der Negativität*, 451–452.

to comprise the totality of reality, negations are a part of the mental process by which man tries to come to terms with experience by continually making distinctions and counterdistinctions, perpetually structuring and re–structuring experience. Each negation calls for an explanation of its rationale in order to relate it to a pragmatic or a semantic context. Texts which like *Absalom, Absalom!* are studded with negations become a maze in which the reader has to find his/her way. The negations hinder a straightforward movement; they rather serve as counterpoints so that more than one line of thought or the dialectic between emotion and intellect, between the conscious and the unconscious[10] can be carried forward simultaneously. The synthesis to be achieved can be compared to that in a contrapuntal musical structure.[11]

As a strategy of discourse, negation may be said to be a major text–generating principle. What becomes manifest on the level of discourse is, however, also the appropriate textual and structural configuration of the story which the novel presents. The story unfolded in *Absalom, Absalom!* is made up of a series of repudiations and denials, rejections and negations motivating the plot and causing the characters to suffer. Pivotal experiences of this type are too well known to bear repetition in detail here: the rejection of young Sutpen at the front door of the plantation house, Rosa Coldfield's refusal to accept Sutpen's proposal, Sutpen's denial of Charles Bon. Sutpen himself speaks of the "negation of the design" (*AA*, 273) which he is pursuing unfalteringly to the end of his life. In as far as *Absalom, Absalom!* is the story of Sutpen's design, it may even be contended that Sutpen is driven by the principle of negativity which — in Kenneth Burke's words —

> will enable men to build up vast empires, all based on this distinction, which says in effect, "Thou shalt not take these things of mine, nor I of thine." . . . For in their essence, "mine" and "thine" are implicitly modes of negative command, ways of saying in effect: "No trespassing."[12]

In the realm of nonverbal reality this negation must mean destruction and elimination. Only in language can negation accord existence to that which is not, can the presence of absence be maintained. What has ceased to exist in history may persist as discourse. *Absalom, Absalom!* can be regarded as a fictional reflection of this predicament.

As part of a fictional structure, neither history nor discourse ever had, of course, any real existence. But here lies the strength of fiction: by

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[10] For an interpretation that makes use of Freud's observations on the negation see Maire J. Kurrik, "Robinson Jeffers's Negations: The Dialectics of 'Not' in 'The Bloody Sire'," *Psychocultural Review*, 1 (1977): 195–201.

[11] Friedrich, 117.

[12] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 285.

positing what never was, fiction becomes a way of negating the impermanence of reality.[13] Fiction thus follows the same principle of paradox as negation. By creating open mental spaces of possibilities, fiction gives expression to the expectations and frustrations of the culture that produces it.

Faulkner shares the poetics of negation with other authors who helped to shape the modernist tradition, with Herman Melville and Joseph Conrad, with Stéphane Mallarmé and Wallace Stevens, to name only a few. The foregoing remarks may justify a reading of *Absalom, Absalom!* as metafiction. Yet a word of caution seems in order. Faulkner is not yet a postmodern author whose sole concern is the writing of writing. *Absalom, Absalom!* and the uses of negation point in that direction. But Faulkner still hopes to link literature and life so as to reach historical experience in and beyond language.

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[13] Wellershoff, 221; Stierle, "Der Gebrauch der Negation," 249.

Jacques Pothier (Paris)

Negation in Faulkner: Saying No to Time and Creating One's Own Space

What springs to mind when dealing with negation and writing in Faulkner is his famous phrase, most commonly taken up from the foreword to *The Faulkner Reader*, that the writer is "saying No to death" or to Time.[1] My purpose is to comment on negativity as it is mirrored in the style, and to see how this denial of time is achieved through creating a sanctuary of space.

Maurice Blanchot defined literature as "le règne fascinant de l'absence du temps."[2] In Faulkner, it would be more appropriate to talk of the "fascinating reign" of the *negation* of time, since negativity is an important feature in these moments which make fiction art. One example might be Ike McCaslin's pilgrimage two years after Sam Father's death. As young Ike gets off a train, he passes from a world of agreements — such as Major de Spain's deal with a lumber company — to a world of negation: "Then he was in the woods, not alone but solitary; the solitude closed about him ... . They did not change, and, timeless, would not ..." (*GDM*, 323). Here is a typical pattern of negating a notion generally understood to be negative (loneliness) in order to assert a "true" value. After an italicized reminiscence, the value of this limited patch of land reserved from the sale of the lumber company is further explained:

> ... the knoll which was no abode of the dead because there was no death, not Lion and not Sam; not held fast in earth but free in earth and not in earth but of earth, myriad yet undiffused ... and, being myriad, one. (*GDM*, 328–29)

The *not/but* pattern is used to negate a reference to a negative perception, and the climax of the sentence is, as often, an oxymoron. Typically, value is shown to be in negation of linear *time* and associated with "the four corner-markers" of a space (*GDM*, 327).

These stylistic devices should not be regarded as a feature of Faulkner's mature writing only: they occur early on, for instance in his first novel, *Soldiers' Pay*. This novel shows self-negating phrases, paradoxical state-

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1 The foreword is dated 1953, but the sentence also occurs in *RN*, 215, and, as "saying No to time," in the unfinished manuscript of *Elmer*.

2 Maurice Blanchot, *L'espace littéraire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1955), 22.

ments and a taste for synesthetic images — which Walter Slatoff has aptly termed "psychological oxymorons."[3] The novel, like the contemporaneous poems of *The Marble Faun*, provides many examples of the well-known oxymoron of "terrific arrested motion."[4] Oxymorons are especially powerful when silence is made to conflict with sounds: Faulkner thus mentions the "orderly silence louder than a riot" of batallions on their way to the front (*SP*, 176).[5]

Early on, Faulkner seemed fascinated by the power of language to conjure up an *un*reality — which is phantasmally illustrated by Darl's literal understanding of the two faces of a coin at the end of *As I Lay Dying* (*AILD*, 244). Symbolically, in *Soldiers' Pay* Januarius Jones derives his name from the double-faced Roman God Janus, the god of beginnings and endings, of gates and passages through time and space.

In *Soldiers' Pay* Mrs. Burney, the comic widow, heralds the paradoxical title of the novel *As I Lay Dying* — a dangling clause from the unlikely speech of a dead person. Mrs. Burney enjoys the status which the death of her son gave her in the community, making his absence tangible: "[T]here is my Dewey dead," she repeats. The narrator comments: "[H]er boy had done this for her, his absence accomplishing that which his presence had never done, could never do" (*SP*, 180). John T. Matthews points out that writing should not replace the reality which is missing, but convey the sense of loss.[6] Loss is certainly central to *Soldiers' Pay*, with negation as a medium, since this is firstly the assertion of what might be, and secondly a modality of this assertion: the judgment of a loss. Mahon's scar creates a world of discourse.

Actually Faulkner is interested in non-verbal reality which mirrors the duality inherent to language. The liquids in the globes of a drugstore window, which time has turned from red and green to "a weak similar brown" might be an example of this perception of a dual world in which meaning is idealistically sought in clearly opposed "realities" (*SP*, 145). This physical polarization obviously suggests what time might do to the South, as though blackness were a mere opposite to whiteness, not a figure

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3 Walter J. Slatoff, "The Edge of Order: The Pattern of Faulkner's Rhetoric" [1957], reprinted in *William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism*, ed. Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1963), 173–198, provides many examples of the contradictory suggestions I am dealing with. The distinction he makes between three types — motion/immobility; sound/silence; quiescence/turbulence — is questionable: these are three aspects of the contrast between the fixedness of the concept, of language, and the often celebrated mobility of life.

4 See "Out of Nazareth," *NOS*, 46.

5 Years later, the loudness of silence is to assail Mink Snopes after he has killed Jack Houston's hound (*H*, 264).

6 John T. Matthews, *The Play of Faulkner's Language* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 21.

of otherness. Thus for Quentin Compson virginity, which "must be destroyed in order to have existed at all" is paradigmatic: it depends on its polar opposite (*AA*, 96). For the idealist, any compromise blurs the system of meaning of life, which is thus shown to be "a tale/Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,/ Signifying nothing" (*Macbeth*, V, v).

The negativity of discourse enables it to create order and therefore meaning, but how are we to make sense of the meaninglessness of the world? The spoken word does little but add more sound to the noises of the world. Donald Mahon is lucky enough to be isolated from the "light, motion, sound" of the world by his scar (*SP*, 200). In later works, both old Bayard Sartoris and Linda Snopes achieve more effective isolation by becoming deaf. As Karl F. Zender has noted, "with increasing frequency as his career progresses, Faulkner uses images of sound to express, not reciprocity between the self and the other, but rather invasion of the self *by* the other."[7] However, a clear dinstinction between *voice* and *sound* must be made: voices are a medium of social intercourse which is regarded as superficial and not to be trusted, but sounds, noise, seem to be constantly associated with unwanted aggression.[8] In *A Fable* it is a sound which restores the martial order over the town:

> At that moment the sunset gun thudded: no sound, but rather a postulation of vacuum, as though back into its blast–vacated womb the regurgitated martial day had poured in one reverberant clap ... . (*FAB*, 239)

Describing a "reverberant clap" as a negation of sound undermines the pretension of language to classify and clarify an essentially mobile reality. As Gail L. Mortimer puts it, "Faulkner undermines our belief that we can *know*, and thus feel in some control of the past [by using such structures] in ways that confuse our perceptions and call into question the very narrative he is relating."[9] Not only do the contradictions attempt to suggest something of the complexity of a chaotic world, as Walter Slatoff and Warren Beck have it,[10] but they question the power of language to institute anything but its own incoherence.

Beyond the negation of the world which language is, Faulkner ultimately suggests that truth might *lie* beneath the words — which is not

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7 Karl F. Zender, "Faulkner and the Power of Sound," *PMLA*, 99 (1984), 89–108.

8 Even the voice of the preacher in *The Sound and the Fury* suggests aggression: "He was like a worn small rock whelmed by the successive waves of his voice. With his body he seemed to feed the voice that, succubus like, had fleshed its teeth in him" (*SF*, 294). Attuned to the negativity of language, the voice seems to eat itself into nothingness.

9 Gail L. Mortimer, *Faulkner's Rhetoric of Loss* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 8.

10 Slatoff writes that the style reflects a view of life as complex (194); Warren Beck sees the device as "analytical narrowing down" which brings together the dimensions of appearance and reality: in short, it makes realism more precise (*Man in Motion: Faulkner's Trilogy* [Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1963], 37–38).

my play on words, since Faulkner's early fiction explores the double fields of meaning of the two homonymous verbs *to lie*. Faulkner sees himself as a follower of the traditional Southwestern yarnspinners. In answer to a question in Virginia, he once declared: "A writer is a liar, ma'am. That's why they call it fiction."[11]

"The Liar," in one of Faulkner's most interesting *New Orleans Sketches*, actually denies his very self by telling a true story; the device is used to arouse awareness about a dangerous stranger. At the end of the story the liar lies — in bed, recovering from the brawl, his credit gone: the truth of speech has proved unable to deal with the world.

In "Carcassonne" the protagonist is lying and dreaming of flying away from his skeleton on the winged horse of his imagination. For the time being, he is rather like the failing pilot in Faulkner's first published story, "Landing in Luck": "the 'f' out of flying. Biggest liar in the R.A.F." (*EPP*, 50).

As he recalled in the foreword to *The Faulkner Reader* and elsewhere, Faulkner's first dream was to fly. After "they ... stopped the war on him," as they did to Cadet Lowe in *Soldiers' Pay*, he did the next best thing: he wrote books, i.e. he "lay low" — in an obvious play on words, Cadet Lowe's mother had ordered her son to "fly low" (*SP*, 24) — and tried *lying*, with the "f" for Faulkner left out. As initials tend to be meaningful in Faulkner, the "f" can be regarded as a symbol for the *f*ather's name — possibly the symbolic fathers (adults, politicians, generals) who make up the *they* who prevent the fulfillment of the son's desire. Reduced to the initial only, the father's name is cut to the minimum element which indicates the loss of the whole.[12]

Of course, biographical evidence shows that Faulkner did both write and fly — later on, since it is now generally assumed that he *lied* about his *flying* (as a pilot) in the R.A.F. during the war.[13] Joseph Blotner reports that in February 1933 Faulkner was learning to fly all over again.[14]

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[11] Heard by James Hinkle on a tape at the University of Virginia. Reported in "The Civil War in the Apocrypha According to William Faulkner," *Faulkner and History*, ed. Javier Coy and Michel Gresset (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 1986), 38.

[12] On the meaning of letters, see Giliane Morell, "La force du désir," *L'Arc*, 84/85 (1983), 39–58. The relevant letters for our purpose are "f" and "s," whose intermittence is made clear by a sentence from *Soldiers' Pay:* "... the intermittent silver smugness of rain spaced forever with poplars like an eternal frieze giving way upon vistas fallow and fecund" (*SP*, 176); "f" for father, "s" for son. *F*einman airport is ominous to Roger *S*humann; many characters who may pass as representatives of the author have "s" initials: Sartoris, Suratt, Stevens, Sutpen, Shumann. Typically, ambiguous *F*lem *S*nopes, also an outsider like Suratt/Ratliff, took years of maturing before he could be used in a novel.

[13] See Michael Millgate, *The Achievement of William Faulkner*, 2nd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978), viii.

[14] Joseph L. Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography*, 2 vols. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1974), 795.

This was six months after his father's death. Earlier references to flying are closely associated with *f*alling and dying, as if in self–censorship of desire; examples are numerous, from John Sartoris to "Death Drag." I can think of no more striking example of the association of desire with *f*lying, *f*alling — and *F*aulkner than Jones' remark in *Soldiers' Pay*: "Do you know how falcons make love? They embrace at an enormous height and fall locked, beak to beak, plunging: an unbearable ecstasy" (*SP*, 227). The word *falcon*, like the father's name *Falkner*, includes the fall which desire implies. By adding a "u," Faulkner was not so much restoring something which had been lost (see *SL*, 212) as precluding the father–suppressed urge: "u" for *YOU fall.*

To turn back to Faulkner's career, the title "As I Lay Dying" was first applied to two fragments from an abandoned novel, *Father Abraham*, later shortened to "Abraham's Children" — a suggestion that *lying*, and even pretending to die, is the viable course for a son to follow in the forbidding shadow of a father.[15]

In the "Addie" section of the novel *As I Lay Dying* words are described as "a thin line" flying up free from "doing" (*AILD*, 165). To the one dimension of the line may be opposed the two dimensions of surface which *lying* suggests. Writing, by using space as a medium, deepens the early device of negation by which loss meant more than presence, exemplified by the indentation of Miss Emily's head in a pillow next to Homer Barron's body (*CS*, 130). In *Intruder in the Dust*, Faulkner shows what did not happen on the Monday after Lucas Beauchamp was arrested. Meaning does not come from the event itself, but from the background which singles it out as a fault which *takes place* in the otherwise flawless pageant of time. In *Requiem for a Nun* Faulkner suggests that man can negate the negativity of death by carving out the hollow of an event into the sequence of life and death. The founding of the city shifts the course of time from vertical — the geological layers — to horizontal — the centrifugal force of the building of a county or state. Like the writing on the pane in "The Jail," fiction–writing uses space as the medium through which man's "puny voice" can inscribe an event, thus negating time which negates him.

In the early text "The Hill" negation is extensively used to point at the hidden world beyond the words. From the top of a hill, a "casual" contemplates the valley and *fails* to see what is to be the core of later Yoknapatawpha novels. The whole paragraph sounds like a paralepsis of the program of Faulkner's career; for instance, the last sentence is an an-

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[15] The story was finally published as "Spotted Horses." My evidence on the *Father Abraham* material comes from examination of the Faulkner collection at the University of Virginia, which I describe in my presentation of the translation of one of the "As I Lay Dying" texts, "'Tandis que j'agonise': La parole en dérive," *Sud*, 48/49 (1983), 72–96.

ticipation of *Light in August* or even *The Sound and the Fury*:

> In the valley there was no movement save the thin spiraling of *smoke* and the heart–tightening grace of the poplars, no *sound* save the measured faint reverberation of an anvil. (*EPP*, 91; my emphasis)

The text is all the more interesting as a twin text, "Nympholepsy," reveals a hidden dimension.

Many elements of Faulkner's works seem to stand in mutual negation: a number of novels could not have appeared without their negative counterparts having been committed to writing first. The most obvious instance is *Pylon*, a novel of negation of home and even ground, as the paralepsis of *Absalom, Absalom!*, the novel at the end of which Faulkner drew the map of his imaginary county, claiming it as "Sole Owner and Proprietor."

The world of Faulkner's fiction is often divided between the space proper and its negative: the example at the beginning of this study shows that in "The Bear" the wilderness is the negative of the modern world. The contrast between "the hills" and "the bottom" is less often noticed, but interesting: the hills are wasteland, inhabited by ruthless, degraded people whose very names are corrupted.[16] They confound borders and laws alike, the very denizens of chaos.

Such strange lands — not necessarily wastelands — are natural attractions to the writer. To Faulkner, the experience of exile was urgent; in the first place in New Orleans. Before his first novel, which is set in a town characterized by the fact that it was *not* his home town, the first of the *New Orleans Sketches* reads as a manifesto on the sense of negated place: Faulkner's "Wealthy Jew" claims that he could actually belong everywhere in the world if he wished to. He boasts his untainted blood, whereas he imagines other races mourning their "mingled and thinned and lost" blood. Deprived of a *commonplace* home by a contingency in history, the wealthy Jew is rich with his self–created space.

As Faulkner's vision develops, though, it turns out that what is lost cannot be recovered through speech, which is slave to the deathlike dimension of time and the chaos of sound. Conversely, writing is spread on a page. The image of the page to describe landscape occurs early on: "He trod in dust between dark trees like spilled ink upon the pale clear page of the sky" (*SP*, 312). This recurring image can be reversed, with the page seen as a landscape in which meaning is the road which the reader has to find. The endless sentences of Faulkner's style, with their many negative

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[16] See *ID*, *passim*, or the opening pages of *The Hamlet*; also my comment on the Appalachian background as fringe to Faulkner's space: "L'arrière–pays appalachien comme marge de l'espace faulknerien," *Cahiers Charles V*, 5 (Paris: Université Paris VII, 1983), 107–119.

clauses, chart the roads not taken, cheating the one dimension of linear speech. As the awareness of space develops, negations need not express false starts or misconceptions: *not/but* patterns turn into the more positive *not only/but*. Negation is a way of reinforcing what seems to be negated, straining negation to a plain modality. Each denied statement is a line thrown in a different, but not necessarily opposite, direction.

With its many trials and errors, *Absalom, Absalom!* is the perfect example of the new process: the map of contingencies resembles the map of the county at the end of the book, with its wheel–spokes radiating from the hub of the courthouse — where the books are kept, as *Requiem for a Nun* is to remind us. *Absalom, Absalom!* may be seen as a watershed in Faulkner's treatment of time; the crushing weight of time is never again to be so overpowering after Sutpen has splendidly failed to create Sutpen's Hundred. Not only does the negativity of writing make loss present, but exile should be followed with a second stage in which negation is used to deconstruct commonplace language to create one's own substitute space. Beyond negativity, truth is one negation further.

The metaphor of space as a negation of the outer world and its destructive time looks all the more stable since mastery over space seems to include the phantasy of mastery over time: "when you go to the trouble to invent a private domain of your own, then you are the master of time, too" (*FU*, 29). Yet Faulkner's later style seems to reflect a fear that the world might be threatening a writer's bordered, degraded space, and more concretely his actual estate. The words he voices might be taken away from his meaning by the loudness of the world and commonplace ideas. Faulkner dreams of a captive reader like Linda Snopes in *The Mansion*, whose deafness makes her dependent on Gavin Stevens' writing tablets. But what is to be done against an invasion of one's own space by the world?

The essay "On Privacy" exposes the loss of meaning behind "the loud and empty words which we have emasculated of all meaning whatever — freedom, democracy, patriotism," now reduced to a "cacophony" of "mouthsounds" — an interesting coinage (*ESPL*, 62–75). In this very carefully drafted 1955 essay, Faulkner no longer seems to take for granted the emptiness of words. The fourteen pages offer some forty instances of Faulknerian denial, as though the author tended to regard words as potential traitors, never to be trusted unless the commonplace connotations of a loud, degraded society have been negated, discarded.

This vision suggests comparisons with Freud's speculative theory of the founding of society as the murder of a primal father by a conspiracy of the primal horde of the brothers.[17] When the community derives its law

[17] Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo* (1913), *Standard Edition*, XIII (London: Hogarth Press, 1957).

from the negation of the father's Word, how could the sons be confident that their derivative, limited law will not in its turn be negated? The answer could be *redemption*, but, as Claude–Edmonde Magny wrote, Faulkner's world is previous to incarnation.[18]

The title of Faulkner's last novel, *The Reivers*, invites comparison with the early story "The Liar" across Faulkner's whole career. It is Faulkner's only Yoknapatawpha novel to take place mainly outside the county's borders, as if to negate the author's own space. This transgression is reflected in the questioning of received social values, which are shown to be lies: the deputy sheriff is a threat to actual justice, a whore becomes a symbol of enduring purity, and a horse race is won outside the course. The son negating the father's discourse may have to negate the brothers' *mouthsounds*, but the first line of the novel suggests that the grandfather's stand may ultimately offer the unlimited, convenient space of reminiscence.

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[18] Claude–Edmonde Magny, "Faulkner ou l'inversion théologique," *L'âge du roman américain* (Paris: Seuil, 1948), 196–243; 210.

Wolf Kindermann (Berlin)

Visual Motion in Faulkner's Narrative Art

At the 1978 Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference on "Faulkner, Modernism, and Film," Ilse Dusoir Lind and Bruce Kawin discussed the interdependence of Faulkner's poetic and narrative writing with other art forms. Whereas Lind showed the influence of modern — especially expressionist — painting on Faulkner's technique, Kawin traced the simultaneous effects of the modernist crisis in literature, painting, and film as well as the resulting efforts to transcend the state of fragmentation by creating a new synthesis out of conflicting but simultaneous perspectives, and linked these processes to Faulkner's technique of montage.[1] In the same year, Arthur F. Kinney joined the discussion about the role of vision by pointing out that the "developing narrative consciousness in Faulkner proceeds by correlations of whole chains of ... images" which are "synecdoches for the narrative consciousness which they help to define." As Kinney shows, Faulkner insists "that *human consciousness is a similar, parallel act of metaphorization*," and his narrative power is intended "to awaken all our resources of metaphor–making — our language, our consciousness, and our imagination."[2] In the *Paris Review* interview Faulkner referred to the embryonic "mental picture" out of which the organic whole of his novels would emerge. In order to illustrate this process of elaboration he evoked the musical analogy of creating a melody which in the writer's medium corresponds to a silent procession of images produced by words *(LG*, 245).

These statements seem to indicate the importance of the elements of vision and motion in Faulkner's narrative art. Faulkner's own reference to the melody trope as well as Kinney's "chain of images" and their synecdochal relevance warrant two basic assumptions in the analysis of Faulkner's novels. First, in each novel there can be traced "nodal passages"

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1 Ilse Dusoir Lind, "The Effects of Painting on Faulkner's Poetic Form"; Bruce Kawin, "The Montage Element in Faulkner's Fiction," *Faulkner, Modernism, and Film: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1978*, ed. Evans Harrington and Ann J. Abadie (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1978), 127–48; 103–26.

2 Arthur F. Kinney, *Faulkner's Narrative Poetics: Style as Vision* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1978), 93, 91, 261.

which are characterized as focuses of visual motion and definite narrative configurations. Like a motif in a melody, they hold the epistemological "essence" of each novel.[3] Second, since, as Kinney says, Faulkner places the reader at the observational center of his fiction,[4] it is the reader's mode of perception that has to reconstitute the meaning of Faulkner's epistemological and narrative strategies.

It is interesting to note that the efforts in the arts to overcome the modernist crisis of fragmentation were paralleled by holistic theories in the fields of biology (J.C. Smuts); medicine (V. v. Weizsäcker), and especially by the emergence of the *Gestalt* school of psychology, which — though soon riven by internal dissension — rejected the analytical approach of the Anglo–American school of "association of ideas" which had dominated the field of psychology throughout the 19th century. In Berlin, Max Wertheimer (1880–1943) formulated the basic tenets of the *Gestalt* school which grew out of his analysis of how motion is perceived.[5] Human beings, he argued, never reconstitute elements of perception as one would piece together a mosaic, but they always perceive things as a configurational *Gestalt* in which the visual whole has an independent quality that is more than a simple addition of its single elements. Configurations can always be clearly discerned from an unstructured background, as human perception always tends to invest them with meaning — e.g. stellar constellations have been given mythological connotations. All configurations develop from "*Gestalt* germs" in a diffuse initial stage into clear–cut and well–structured entities. The analysis of visual motion in the nodal passages has also to bear in mind Carpenter's "ideomotive law" (1874) — named after the English physiologist William Benjamin Carpenter — according to which every perception of a movement creates a faint impulse to imitate this movement. Of similar importance is William McDougall's (1871–1938) "hormic" psychology, which attempts to describe human impulses and motivations as a complex system of interdependent cognitive and conative functions of the psyche. When one observes processes of motion, one must sooner or later probe into their motivating factors, their objects, and their results. One must find out about the different forms of motion and finally tackle the problem of the first moving principle. Since every movement is characterized by its relativity and perception of movements is only possible if there is an identity, a stable observational center, it is obvious that the identity of the ideal Faulknerian

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3 Kinney, 242: "Reality for Faulkner thus finally relies on such resemblance and contiguity as the deeper and more accurate *perceptual* reality; wherever Faulkner seems to press toward metaphysics, that metaphysics is epistemological."

4 Kinney, 243.

5 Max Wertheimer, *Drei Abhandlungen zur Gestalttheorie* (Erlangen: Weltkreis, 1925).

reader emerges from a growing awareness of the epistemological considerations mirrored in the nodal passages of each novel.

The following instances of visual motion have to be related to Faulkner's idea of his "own little postage stamp of native soil" (*LG*, 255), which is the unmoving, stable point of reference against the backdrop of which all configurations of motion come to life. Faulkner juxtaposes two basic forms of visual motion.

On the one hand, he uses instances of erratic, frantic, or automaton–like movements — Bayard Sartoris driving his car over the precipice and killing his grandfather in *Sartoris*; Ginsfarb jumping from the battered plane in "Death Drag"; the black slaves rushing onto the bridge which the retreating Yankees blow up in *The Unvanquished;* Cash, Jewel, and Darl crossing the treacherous river and saving Addie Bundren's coffin in *As I Lay Dying*; Luster driving the Compson surrey to the wrong side of the Confederate monument and provoking Benjy's roar in *The Sound and the Fury*; the fox hunt in "Was" and Boon Hogganbeck frantically hammering at his broken gun with the squirrels running around him in the final passage of "The Bear" (*GDM*, 4–5; 330–31); Sutpen's eye–gouging fight with his own slaves; the "Spotted Horses" episode and Armstid's mad search for the imaginary treasure planted by Flem Snopes in *The Hamlet* (*H*, 301–2, 364, 366).

On the other hand, these images are counterpoised by concepts of steady progress or motion, e.g. the mule in the cane mill in *Sartoris*, Lena Grove moving slowly through the countryside in *Light in August.*

The most conspicuous contrast in Faulkner's novels is established between the frantic or erratic violence of visual motion in the nodal passages and the clearly circumscribed boundaries of Yoknapatawpha, the small, almost puny dimensions of which are evoked in Faulkner's "postage stamp" trope. The diminutive space tends even to reinforce the vehemence of visual motion and at the same time — because the motion is imprisoned within this microcosmic space — to imply its insignificance when watched from a faraway vantage point which reduces Yoknapatawpha to the size of a postage stamp. The visual motion in all cited instances involves very often desperate human action, but it seems as if the actors — though they go through the motions — are only following impulses which they do not understand nor even heed. There seem to be forces at work which ridicule their frantic efforts, their individuality, or at least the self–importance which they try to establish, to justify or to keep.

If these motions betray a certain puppet–like quality they are also an expression of a striving to overcome the earthly bounds of the human condition. Faulkner conceals his view of the "ruling passions" in man behind his many instances of visual motion. The eye–gouging fight in *Absa-*

lom, Absalom! betrays Sutpen's deepest motives: even after he has reached the coveted status of a planter he is still fighting the ghost of the black servant who once drove him from the front entrance of the big plantation house. In his heart of hearts, he is still haunted by the fears of his "poor white" psyche, by the "shadow of the Ethiopian" that blighted Melville's Benito Cereno. With Sutpen struggling for immortality and Flem Snopes doggedly pursuing his "design" to reach respectability, Faulkner's simple country people are looking for more immediate and more material advantages which, however, — as is shown in the "Spotted Horses" and treasure hunt episodes in *The Hamlet* — turn out to be even more ephemeral than Sutpen's or Snopes' aspirations. The struggle of the black slaves for freedom in *The Unvanquished,* Benjy's helpless protest against any change in the order and immutability of his universe (which also reflects the Compsons' desperate attempts to stay the changes in their lives), and the schemes and efforts of a whole series of protagonists in Faulkner who try to safeguard their personal innocence and purity only illustrate the vanity of human aspirations and designs. The comic, tragic, and grotesque configurations, however, seem to betray a certain, perhaps only subconscious inkling the characters have about the uselessness of their strained efforts. Faulkner introduces a 20th century secularized version of the Christian vanity motif which is embodied in his central Icarian image of a man's fall from a height.[6] He contrasts this metaphor of man's fall with the earth–bound stoicism of Lena Grove, Dilsey, and the eulogy of the mule in *Sartoris*: all of them keep in touch with the seasons and the cycle of life.

Both erratic and steady motions — despite their difference in meaning — are instances of an elementary force of life, which transforms these movements into esthetic configurations attesting the fundamental value of life, however painful, warped, and limited it might seem at first sight:

> Since people exist only in life, they must devote their time simply to being alive. Life is motion, and motion is concerned with what makes a man move — which are ambition, power, pleasure. What time man can devote to morality, he must take by force from the motion of which he is a part. ... His moral conscience is the curse he had to accept from the Gods in order to gain from them the right to dream. (*LG*, 253)

If all motion is the essence of life, then all living beings share the same fate: they are granted a certain span of time on this earth to live out their lives, but all their rovings, exploits, and designs are by invisible threads bound to the earth which sooner or later will reclaim them as it reclaims

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[6] Ginsfarb in "Death Drag," John Sartoris jumping from his burning plane (*SAR*, 252); Donald Mahon's plane crash in World War I (*SP*, 293–94).

Mink Snopes in the final scene of the Snopes Trilogy:

> In fact, the ground itself never let a man forget it was there waiting, pulling gently and without no hurry at him between every step, saying, Come on, lay down; I aint going to hurt you. Jest lay down ... it seemed to him he could feel the Mink Snopes that had had to spend so much of his life just having unnecessary bother and trouble, beginning to creep, seep, flow easy as sleeping; he could almost watch it, following all the little grass blades and tiny roots, the little holes the worms made, down and down into the ground already full of the folks that had the trouble but were free now, so that it was just the ground and the dirt that had to bother and worry and anguish with the passions and hopes and skeers, the justice and injustice and the griefs, leaving the folks themselves easy now, all mixed and jumbled up comfortable and easy so wouldn't nobody even know or even care who was which any more .... (*M*, 434–35)

Insofar as the reader's consciousness, the attention of his mind's eye, can be focused upon the epistemological value of the visual motion performed in the nodal passages[7] it will develop a growing awareness of Faulkner's perspective on the human condition and concomitantly on its own situation in the world. If the analysis of visual motion allows access to Faulkner's epistemological concerns, these are also mirrored in the configurations created by the movements of the novels themselves. *As I Lay Dying* can be interpreted as a linear — though erratic — journey giving evidence of the strength of human will. The power of Addie's will keeps her family together beyond her death and even spurs them to joint efforts they would probably never have troubled about during her lifetime. But once her will has been carried out to the letter, the spell of her influence over the family is broken and it disintegrates. *As I Lay Dying* is a study of transitoriness and of the adaptability of Faulkner's simple country people; it contrasts with the strained journey through the sticky layers of time in *Absalom, Absalom!* that makes Quentin Compson a helpless prisoner of the past. The Snopes Trilogy reveals Flem Snopes' calculated design to move to the center of respectability which, however, turns out to be the absolute void. In *The Sound and the Fury* there is a movement through various depths of focus of human consciousness which is accompanied by a growing awareness of the social, historical, and anthropological stymie in which the South has manoeuvered itself. In *Go Down, Moses* the wilderness and its regenerative qualities wither away in a process similar to Balzac's famous piece of shagreen which instantly fulfills every wish of its owner but at the same time constantly shrinks until, with its dissolution, its owner will also irrevocably lose his life. In *Light in August* Lena's

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[7] Michel Gresset, in his book *Faulkner ou la fascination. Poétique du regard* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1982) has analyzed the functions of vision and focus in Faulkner in the context of the discussion about the phenomenological and epistemological qualities of perception (Merleau–Ponty, Lacan, Starobinski, etc.).

steady movement for a short moment crosses Joe Christmas' erratic search for his identity in the center of Yoknapatawpha as a result of which Joe's life is taken in a horrible act of immolation revealing the darkest side of human passions, but out of which at the same time a new life is born. Symbolically, this is carried out beyond Yoknapatawpha and thus heralds a breaking of the racial spell which has blighted life there for so long.

Besides the nodal passages and the novels' configurational movements which both can serve as an access to Faulkner's thinking there is a third element to be mentioned in this discussion of visual motion. Early critics like Conrad Aiken, Warren Beck, and Jean–Jacques Mayoux have already mentioned Faulkner's use of an "image–stream," his tendency towards "kaleidoscopic suspension," and the "dreamlike quality" he evokes in many gestures, places, and scenes.[8] More recently, Ilse Dusoir Lind has mentioned "the curiously dreamlike quality of the unfolding of action of *Light in August* itself."[9] If there is no need to reopen the discussion, prompted by Freud's student Otto Rank, about qualitative similarities in the genetic processes of writing and dreaming, there is still the problem of the functions of the dreamlike sequences in Faulkner's novels: John Sartoris falling from the airplane during a World War I air battle as it is remembered by Bayard in *Sartoris* (*SAR*, 252), Hightower's ever recurrent reverie about his grandfather galloping into death in *Light in August* (*LA*, 56, 458f, 467), and Rider's drunken scudding across the ground in the moonlight in an attempt to forget about his wife's death in "Pantaloon in Black" (*GDM*, 142, 148–49). Post–Freudian cognitive theories about the functions of dreams interpret dream images as symbols which give hints pointing towards relevant, but still hazy issues in the process of individuation. These dream images are an expression of pre–verbal awareness as well as a compensatory discourse supplementing the rational level of explanation. According to C.G. Jung, at this pre–rational dream level there is a conjunction between symbols pertaining to the individual experience as well as those timeless archetypes which grow out of the collective unconscious of mankind. In the words of the English philosopher and art historian Herbert Read:

> It is Jung's reasonable assumption that the profoundest social experiences of mankind must have left some physiological trace in the structure of the brain;

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[8] Conrad Aiken, "William Faulkner: The Novel as Form;" Warren Beck, "William Faulkner's Style," both reprinted in *Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Robert Penn Warren (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), 46–52; 53-65, esp. 48 and 63; Jean–Jacques Mayoux, "The Creation of the Real in William Faulkner" [1952], reprinted in *William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism*, ed. Olga Vickery and Frederick J. Hoffman (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1960), 156–72; 172.

[9] Ilse Dusoir Lind, "Faulkner's Uses of Poetic Drama," *Faulkner, Modernism, and Film*, 66–81; 80.

> and in particular that some of the earliest experiences of the species, long forgotten in the comparative security of historical times, left the deepest traces. ... Jung says specifically ... that the primordial images which proceed from this chthonic level of the brain show most clearly "the influence of the earth and its laws upon the mind." The archetypes, therefore, are a function of the brain, but we are not normally aware of their existence. ... They connect up with mnemonic images, deeply buried memories of racial experience, and as these images emerge into individual consciousness, perhaps transformed on the way, they inevitably revive and represent countless typical experiences of our ancestors.[10]

Faulkner's dream sequences not only dramatize the existential predicaments of the Southern experience, they also resound with fundamental archetypal experiences. The fall of John Sartoris echoes the descent of Icarus; the attempts to cross rivers in *As I Lay Dying* and *The Unvanquished* bring to mind the story of Moses as well as notions of transitoriness and the mythic river Styx of the Greek underworld. The fight between Sutpen and his black slaves recalls the struggle between Cain and Abel and the everlasting Manichaean struggle between light and darkness. In "Pantaloon in Black" there are hints of Orpheus' descent into the underworld in search of Eurydice. Hightower's reverie about the galloping horses evokes the Indo–European symbol of the horse as guide of the soul as well as the incarnation of the Zoroastrian chthonian spirit Ahriman. Many of Faulkner's dream sequences are set in the silvery light of the moon which alludes to the symbolic value of the moon for the unconscious regions of the mind. Silver as a color in the Christian tradition, however, was often used to symbolize the purification of man's soul. Thus, it seems, Faulkner created the dream sequences as nodal passages in which he dramatized central elements of the Southern unconscious and blended and amplified these with still more fundamental archetypes. According to the Jungian explanation of the "prospective" function of dreams, Faulkner, in his dream sequences, tries to shape a vision of the inexpressible which amalgamates his individual experience with the collective unconscious of his region and the most fundamental and ever recurring archetypes of human existence.

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[10] Herbert Read, *The Forms of Things Unknown: Essays Towards an Aesthetic Philosophy* (London: Faber, 1960), 54.

Social Realities and Literary Discourse

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The Rhetoric of Containment in Faulkner[1]

I suppose that even on just a second reading of *The Sound and the Fury*, many readers would admit to nostalgia for the astonishment of their initial attempt at the opening page of the novel. The unblinking simplicities of that remarkable first paragraph, the narrative viewpoint's tight focus on the mere sequence of body movements in the field of vision, the record of motion drained of apparent interpretation or explanation, a first–person account so primitive as to endanger the very idea of personality — all these elements create for the competent reader a disquieting, but not necessarily unpleasant, sense of helplessness. Faulkner emphatically estranges the novel's discourse from the kinds of contexts readers ordinarily use to situate their reading. The reader's confinement to Benjy's range of observation and association means that important frameworks remain invisible. No traces of intertextual reference signal our literary bearings; no gesture of realistic technique evokes an historical time or place; nor do the individual observations cohere under any design of self–representation on the part of the speaker. Faulkner's text behaves as if it has no context.

The first paragraph of *The Sound and the Fury* sets out these conditions for the production of its discourse. The events in the outer world that Benjy describes are visible only through gaps in the barriers containing him: "Through the fence, between the curling flower spaces, I could see them hitting" (*SF*, 3). The novel opens access to the world beyond its own premises in the same narrative motion with which it forecloses a full occupation or possession of that world. Benjy's confinement to the Compson grounds prefigures the whole novel's close concentration on the inner workings of the single mind, the single house. Unlike *Absalom, Absalom!*, which conducts us back through the Compson story in order to see it framed by the South's history, *The Sound and the Fury* first appears isolated from the world beyond its perimeters. Our situation resembles Quentin's when, in twilight, face thrust close to Caddy's as they play in the branch, he distinguishes her as "framed out of the blur of the sand by her hair" (*SF*, 150). The background blurs because the novel has eyes only for Caddy.

[1] I gratefully acknowledge a Fellowship for Independent Research in 1984–85 from the National Endowment for the Humanities, which supported my work on framing in literature.

Faulkner introduces a second feature of the novel's mode of production by eliding the origin of Benjy's voice. After Benjy watches the golfers go away, Luster remarks, "'Listen at you, now'" (*SF*, 3). Readers eventually learn to look for these signals that the mention of Caddy's name and the rhythm of appearance and disappearance set off Benjy's moaning. But here, as elsewhere, Benjy's narrative refuses to connect his voice to the conditions that activate it. The event of an utterance must be inferred through its effects, just as its cause must be inferred through the logic of juxtaposition. This first instance of the production of voice epitomizes the status of the discourse itself — the grounds of its origin obscured. The novel elides the location of its voice in social and historical circumstances.

My account of the comparatively unframed nature of *The Sound and the Fury* is not meant to deny that we can in fact glimpse the outer world through gaps in the textual perimeters. The novel has always been read as a portrait of the decline of the aristocratic South, and not just through the kind of general allegorical procedures allowing the Compsons to stand for the history of their class and region, and not only after the retrospective framing of *The Sound and the Fury* by *Absalom, Absalom!* in 1936 or by the Appendix in 1946. We all recognize that the novel does point, however remotely, to the apparent death of the old South's romantic ideals and to the onslaught of new social, racial, and economic realities in the decades immediately surrounding World War I.

Yet the critical tradition bears out the sort of position taken recently by Eric Sundquist in *The House Divided*, from which he asserts that *The Sound and the Fury* sinks below the social horizon as it concentrates on the eccentricities of its characters. For Sundquist, this process appears in Faulkner's treatment of race: Sundquist argues that Faulkner's "career up to *Light in August* might well be considered an extended repression of the figure of the Negro."[2] The later novels achieve a depth of racial consciousness that is of explosive social, rather than strictly psychoanalytic, interest. On the other hand, as *Absalom, Absalom!* would prove in detail, *The Sound and the Fury* does force this central issue back into the unconscious, for there is almost nothing in the earlier novel — while there is everything in the later novel — to indicate that "miscegenation or its shadowy threat is an important feature of Quentin's psychological disturbance."[3] As I have suggested, such avoidance of context operates fundamentally in *The Sound and the Fury's* constitution. And the criticism of the novel has followed those dictates, tirelessly delineating the domains

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[2] Eric J. Sundquist, *Faulkner: The House Divided* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 2.

[3] Sundquist, 26.

of each brother's psychology and reappreciating the book's purely formal virtuosity.

Sundquist's claims for his account of the novel's repression of miscegenation go beyond the simply descriptive. He argues that only when Faulkner pursues his early technical experimentation into the "domain of the greatest resonance" — that is in the post–*Light in August* novels dealing consciously with race — only then does Faulkner's writing mature: " . . . there is reason to believe that without Faulkner's work of the next ten years *The Sound and the Fury* would itself seem a literary curiosity, an eccentric masterpiece of experimental methods and 'modernist' ideas."[4]

By adopting a standard of evaluation based on the capacity of a work consciously to engage its social and historical environment, Sundquist renews a perennial assault on modernism. At least as long ago as Georg Lukács' book on *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, critics especially concerned with the relation of literature to history have faulted literary modernism with the very avoidance of context we began by noting in *The Sound and the Fury*. Lukács argues that modernist fiction leads to an "attenuation of actuality" by rejecting narrative objectivity and surrendering to subjectivity. Lukács has in mind, for example, Kafka's "descriptive detail," which, though of "extraordinary immediacy," is dedicated strictly to the "substituting of his *angst*–ridden vision of the world for objective reality". This attenuation of actuality is produced by Joyce's stream–of–consciousness experimentation, too, an effect "carried *ad absurdum* where the stream of consciousness is that of an abnormal subject or of an idiot — consider the first part of Faulkner's *Sound and Fury* [sic]".[5] Though Faulkner is not Lukács' primary target, *The Sound and the Fury* does represent the kind of modernist realism that Lukács finds ideologically objectionable. The doctrinaire Marxist grounds of Lukács' argument with modernist fiction matter less to my purposes than his identification of chief features of the modernist aesthetic. Lukács sees that the unframed quality of the modernist work in itself has ideological and historical significance.

For Lukács, the attenuation of actuality accompanies the privatization of experience in the modernist work: "Man, for [modernist] writers, is by nature solitary, asocial, unable to enter into relationships with other human beings."[6] Such a state implies a fundamental isolation of man from man and man from history. One consequence of this outlook is that protagonists characteristically suffer mental paralysis or helplessness. If the

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[4] Sundquist, 3.

[5] Georg Lukács, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, trans. John and Necke Monder (London: Merlin Press, 1962), 25–26.

[6] Lukács, 20.

world lacks objective, communally understood reality, then the individual becomes the prisoner of solipsism and subjectivity. Moreover, with this forfeited opportunity to realize one's concrete potential, the typical protagonist in modernist literature suffers an estrangement from the masses: "an abstract polarity of the eccentric and the socially–average . . . leads in modernism to a fascination with morbid eccentricity."[7] The literary subject draws the author's interest because of its profound alienation from society.

The common technical features of modernist literature endorse this implied ideology, as well. The modernist text deprives its readers of perspective, flushing all events to the same level of importance and refusing to subordinate form to a hierarchy of significance. To the extent that modernism makes a fetish of formal innovation, it may be seen as abdicating its responsibilities to engage social conditions. Finally, Lukács reproaches modernism for introducing elements of formal disintegration into its works under the pretext of rendering the incoherence of the contemporary world more exactly. For Lukács — as for other Marxists — the world may always be seen as organized by the coherence of history.

According to this general critique of literary modernism, a formal envelope protects the work from "contamination" by social and historical matter. In Faulkner's case, one view has it that not until the post–*The Sound and the Fury* novels do technical innovation and cultural inquiry join forces. The formal device of framing contributes to that productive combination by arranging various sorts of internal, conscious reflection on the major issues of the fiction. I am thinking, of course, of the embedded narratives of *Absalom, Absalom!*, in which the circumstances of narration force to the surface the typicality of Sutpen's career and its consequences for the Compsons and their audience, including Shreve and the reader. One might notice related effects in the "prefatory" frames of *Go Down, Moses* and *Requiem for a Nun*, which open specific plots to historical and social placement, or in the self–glossing structures of *The Wild Palms, The Unvanquished*, and *Go Down, Moses*, in which stories embrace each other as text and commentary. From this standpoint, one congenial to the kinds of objections made by Lukács and Sundquist, the narrative frame for Faulkner becomes a device for overcoming modernism's attenuation of actuality and repression of the real. The narrative frame insists on an articulated relation with social and historical environment. The absence of frames in *The Sound and the Fury* would then function as a structure of containment, neutralizing that environment by blocking its incursion into the text.[8]

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[7] Lukács, 31.

[8] For the way in which rhetoric may be considered as the whole set of relations implied be-

What I wish to contest in this paper is the absolutism of such a judgment of modernist form. The frame stands as the point of contention for my purposes and interests, but my broader concern involves challenging the conceptions of history and textuality that ground this critique of modernism. In "The Ideology of Modernism," Lukács supposes that reality — the social and historical particulars of the represented world — can be reflected in the literary text. History and its representation enjoy a consonant relation. Fredric Jameson observes that this naive model of textuality fails to account for the way all acts of representation are conditioned by the ideology that prevails in a particular cultural situation.[9] Such acts of representation both indicate and obscure the reality that is controlled by ideology. Jameson proposes a more sophisticated model of the relation between objective reality and textual representation. History — what Lukács and Jameson would both consider the real — must be conceived as non–textual. Objective reality is precisely that which escapes direct representation. Because the ideological function of the text is to repress such reality, it "returns" as the text's unconscious. Textuality is constituted by strategies of containment, or what I am calling the *rhetoric of containment* in *The Sound and the Fury*. Novelistic discourse mobilizes both narrative structure and fictional language to conceal history's conditioning of its apparent free play. To glimpse historical reality, the reader must be prepared to look in the gaps that open in all texts. These pits of contradiction may be read as the points at which history has been given textual form without becoming wholly neutralized. History and its representation abide in a dissonant relation.

Jameson's notion of the political unconscious offers a model of textuality in which all texts act to drive contextual material away or under. This process leads to the resurfacing in crevices of contradiction of that very reality elsewhere invisible. This dynamic complicates Sundquist's view of the text's unconscious. For him, Faulkner's career functions like classical psychotherapy; it eventually produces a full apprehension of reality. In this way Faulkner's fiction is said to develop the "mind of the South" that Sundquist misses in *The Sound and the Fury*. Yet Jameson gives us an instrument for doing what the critics of Faulkner's early modernism seem to find impossible, reading the concerns of the South out of the private worlds of *The Sound and the Fury*. By looking at the structures of disjunction in *The Sound and the Fury*, I hope to demonstrate

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tween the author and reader, see Wayne C. Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961) 105–6 and *passim*. Though I cannot share Booth's heavy personalizing of the features of fictional discourse, his work does establish that rhetoric must include effects beyond the strictly verbal or stylistic such as narrative form.

9 Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981).

that the novel represents the larger social contradictions that condition the outlook of its characters and its author. I intend my argument as well to suggest that the apparently "unframed" status of *The Sound and the Fury* allows this contextual material to appear in the sharpest outline of its contradictions — uncontained by narrative enclosures.

Seen retrospectively from the standpoint of *Absalom, Absalom!* or the 1946 Appendix, *The Sound and the Fury* appears to offer a case study of the break–up of the Southern rural aristocracy, a late but accurate example of the replacement of agrarian by mercantile capitalism. It places the date of the old South's termination somewhere around World War I's absorption of the Civil War in the popular imagination. Quentin's suicide on the eve of Confederate Memorial Day (Jefferson Davis' birthday as well) seems to put the ideals of the old South to rest. By the end of the decade following the war, Jason Compson IV has firmly if madly accommodated himself to the new ways. Indeed, the contour of this evolution accords perfectly with C. Vann Woodward's account of the formation of the new South.[10] But what this coherent version of social transformation fails to explain are the apparent contradictions of orderly succession. Peculiarly, for example, Woodward notices that the so–called old South was really a creation of the new. Not until after reconstruction, when the lessons of Northern industrial entrepreneurialism were embraced by the chastened and newly ambitious South, did the cult of antebellum splendor really take hold. Woodward and others find this puzzling, but I think Faulkner points to its logic in a work like *The Sound and the Fury*. The novel suggests that at the moment of most severe crisis for the survival of the dominant class and its ideology, that ideology's contradictions surface in the very process of reconsolidating itself. What seems to be the simple passage from old to new turns out to be in *The Sound and the Fury* the disguised reinvigoration of the dominant ideology. Mercantile capitalism obscures its affinity with the exploitative mechanism of agrarian, slaveholding capitalism precisely because it rests on the same foundation of economic and racial exploitation. Thus the cult of the old South may be intelligible as a back–formation of the new South's entrenchment. Though there may be new residents in the upper tiers of Southern aristocracy, the notion of a white, leisured, monied class who arrogate the means of agricultural and industrial production to themselves remains largely unchanged.

At the point in modern Southern history at which a family like the Compsons (or the Falkners) appear finally to have lost their economic

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[10] C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877–1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971).

privilege and social prestige altogether, the future may loom as a total overthrowing of the past. Benjy's section voices this dread in an early exchange between Mrs. Compson and her servants. Worrying about the plans for an expedition to the cemetery, Mrs. Compson complains that the more sedate Roskus is unavailable to drive the family: "'It seems to me you all could furnish me with a driver for the carriage once a week. It's little enough I ask ...'" (*SF*, 9). Dilsey has already observed that the decrepit vehicle is "going to fall to pieces under you all some day" (*SF*, 9), and Mrs. Compson nags at T.P. to be careful in their return home: "'You'll turn us over'" (*SF*, 11). Read metaphorically, this scene captures the declined aristocracy's certainty that blacks have an interest in dismantling tradition and stand ready to turn their white masters over.

In complaining incessantly about their servants' unresponsiveness, the Compsons point to an apparent social upheaval. The vestigial gentility of the white, landholding, aristocracy seems poised on the brink of its evaporation. Mrs. Compson defends Jason's treatment of his niece and his domestic help when she reminds Dilsey that "'He's head of the house now. It's his right to require us to respect his wishes. I try to do it, and if I can, you can too'" (*SF*, 278). Jason's doom as head of this house could not be more certain. The belated defense of aristocratic privilege evokes the uncompromising authority of a patriarchal, racist ideology, but Caddy's and her daughter's escapes weaken the patriarchy, just as Frony's relative independence signals a new age. Jason himself scorns his family's retention of an outmoded arrangement: "'You've got a prize set of servants,' Jason said. He helped his mother and himself to food. 'Did you ever have one that was worth killing? You must have had some before I was big enough to remember'" (*SF*, 278).

The signs of the old order's decay abound in *The Sound and the Fury*. Benjy and Luster play in the deserted barn beside the pasture the Compsons have sold. Mrs. Compson prides herself on her physical carriage, which distinguishes "our women" from "washerwomen" (*SF*, 63), and she refuses to use nicknames because "[o]nly common people use them" (*SF*, 64). In this period of the new South's constitution on the ruins of the old, the ideology of the surviving ruling class underwent extreme stress. The trauma of reconstruction had made at least thinkable the overturn of this ideology altogether. Yet by the 1880s that ideology was in the process of aggressively refurbishing itself. Mercantile and industrial capitalism stood ready to take over from antebellum slaveholding agrarian capitalism. To do so meant proposing that the new order would redeem and not repeat the failures of the defeated South. Thus the Compsons' nostalgia and outrage at the apparently final disappearance of the old South in their way of life produces the conditions under which the old

South could become romanticized in the early decades of the twentieth century. The contradiction of the new South involved its simultaneous forfeiture and reavowal of the old South. By adopting Yankee ways, the South hoped to reconstitute the prosperity and dream that the North had destroyed.

The Sound and the Fury represents this process in the Blands of Kentucky, who caricature the gross idealization of aristocratic gentility. One hardly needs to elaborate on Quentin's ridicule of the South according to Gerald and his mother: "how Gerald throws his nigger downstairs and how the nigger plead to be allowed to matriculate in the divinity school to be near marster marse gerald and How he ran all the way to the station beside the carriage with tears in his eyes when marse gerald rid away" (*SF*, 107). What Quentin can see in the Blands' pretense — in their scorn for low class Yankees and pride in caste and blood — is a show of obsolesence. What he cannot see, but what Faulkner comprehends in the novel's disjunctions, is the way in which this vision of antebellum life continues to condition even those who think it no longer applies.

The Sound and the Fury suggests that nostalgia for an innocent manner of living — figured in the novel by Benjy's physical losses, Quentin's narcissistic hurt, and Jason's furious resentment — may be seen as a shield that hides the actual reimposition of a highly oppressive regime. The more the Compsons bemoan a lost purity, and the more they abdicate to their overthrow by the formerly dispossessed, the more their class's ideology disguises its power to *maintain* the categories and mechanisms of the past. The Compson brothers all suffer from forms of dispossession that have social and economic consequences in addition to their more celebrated psychological ones. But even als Faulkner, whose own position in his society approximates theirs, notices these degradations, he also lets us see the resources for his class's and race's recovery. This historical reality is profoundly painful, and its repression governs the Faulkner text as surely in *The Sound and the Fury* as in *Absalom, Absalom!*.

The changes threatened in *The Sound and the Fury* involve the reversal of class hierarchy and the destabilization of racial categories. The novel constantly toys with the prospect that emancipation will make race a matter of behavior rather than genealogy. The Gibsons pride themselves on being "quality" because of their place in the Compson family. They repeatedly refer to lower class blacks as "them niggers" (*SF*, 4), and Dilsey reproves Luster's disobedience by taking the tone of her masters' race: "Dont you sass me, nigger boy" (*SF*, 55). Correspondingly, whites who flout the code of social gentility get condemned as Negroes. Quentin at least mentally wonders to Caddy, "[w]hy must you do like nigger women do in the pasture?" (*SF*, 92); Jason warns his niece that "[w]hen people

act like niggers, no matter who they are the only thing to do is treat them like a nigger" (*SF*, 181); and Uncle Maury's dependence on the Compsons provokes Mr. Compson's caustic appreciation of his brother–in–law: "'He is invaluable to my own sense of racial superiority'" (*SF*, 43).

These remarks reflect a world in which racial amalgamation constitutes the future. How Quentin must recoil from Deacon's assurance that "you and me's the same folks, come long and short" (*SF*, 99), or from the Massachusetts boys' surprise that he "talks like a colored man" (*SF*, 120). The white aristocracy's incensed dread produces Quentin's famous remark that "a nigger is not a person so much as a form of behavior; a sort of obverse reflection of the white people he lives among" (*SF*, 86). Besides pointing to the familiar use of the racial other as the psychological other, this statement also indicates the destabilizing of racial categories in the new South. As Joe Christmas discovers, if negritude is a form of behavior, then the dominant race will insist that black people act like Negroes.

The most powerful agent for racial redefinition in the new South of *The Sound and the Fury* is economic reversal. With the exception of Jason's psychopathic avarice, the economic interests of the novel have, I think, been underappreciated. Both the Compsons and their dependents register the social transformations of an apparent shift in economic modes. The white brothers notice throughout their section the tiny economic advances of their black retainers. Luster, in fact, begins the novel with a quest for financial recovery: he wants lost money that is rightfully his. This struggle of the Negro for economic enfranchisement plays out across *The Sound and the Fury*. The black washwomen are doubtful of Luster's story and wonder if he has found the quarter "in white folks' pocket while they aint looking" (*SF*, 16). But Luster's response is disquietingly enigmatic; he's gotten that quarter, he says, "at the getting place," where there's "plenty more" (*SF*, 14). That blacks might have access to the getting place — in both the biological and financial senses — represents the fear of the master race that the very sources of their authority were profoundly endangered. Back and forth the quarter jumps; it is retaken in the form of a stray golfball by the white golfer, who simply annuls Luster's title to property (*SF*, 54). Luster muses that "[t]hat white man hard to get along with" (*SF*, 54), a reminder that racial relations are inseparable from economic ones. Finally, of course, after Jason destroys his free passes because Luster cannot pay for them, Dilsey manages to get another quarter from Frony, and Luster can go to the show.

This fable of economic independence and access to leisure figures the transformation whites feared, the day when "[n]igger's money good as white folks" (*SF*, 15). It looks to the Compsons as if they are becoming poor, and so "black," just as Negroes are becoming economically indepen-

dent, and so "white." Under Luster's hand, Benjy plays the role of the dispossessed master: the heir–never–to–be still thinks, idiotically, that "*they own this pasture*" (*SF*, 19). "Mulehead," as Luster once calls his charge (*SF*, 50), paces the Compson grounds like a master–turned–slave. He's never let off the place; he's sent out into the cold; and, when he starts to complain about his suffering, Luster threatens to whip him. Like Jim Bond, Benjy becomes the enfeebled dependent of those his line had sought to subjugate. It is no wonder that the Compson dread of such a reversal produces a picture of Luster himself in the leisure formerly reserved for white masters. In *Absalom, Absalom!* Sutpen aspires to Pettibone's hammock as the symbol of mastery and prosperity, but in *The Sound and the Fury*

> [t]here was a hammock made of barrel staves slatted into woven wires. Luster lay down in the swing, but Ben went on vaguely and purposely. He began to whimper again. "Hush, now," Luster said, "I fixin to whup you." (*SF*, 314–15)

This apparently new confusion of race and economic status in the South also may be seen in Quentin's attitude toward Deacon. When Shreve jokes about "what your grandpa did to that poor old nigger," Quentin retorts, "' Now he can spend day after day marching in parades. If it hadn't been for my grandfather, he'd have to work like whitefolks'" (*SF*, 82). Quentin goes on to complain about how even "working nigger[s]" can never be found when you want them, "let alone one that lived off the fat of the land" (*SF*, 83). Quentin's racial hostility derives from economic anxiety. It is Deacon's parasitism that goads Quentin, the "chicanery" that lets him "young marster" the Southern sons of Harvard until he had "completely subjugated" them and "had bled" them until they learn better (*SF*, 97).

The North presents Quentin with the spectacle of racial and economic reversal: when he gets on a streetcar full of "mostly prosperous looking people," he takes the only vacant seat — "beside a nigger" (*SF*, 86). After a while, Quentin notices that he is riding into lower class areas; "men in work–clothes were beginning to outnumber the shined shoes and collars" (*SF*, 89). At this moment, "[t]he nigger touched my knee. 'Pardon me,' he said. I swung my legs out and let him pass." (*SF*, 89). That the Negro might pass — pass as white, work to pass by his former masters — informs Quentin's phobias. This conflation of economic and racial amalgamation touches on his treatment of the little Italian girl as well.

Quentin responds ambivalently to the immigrant's appearance. Although he sympathizes with her poverty, he also recoils from the touch of her hot, damp, dirty fingers; when she opens her palm to pay, Quentin can smell her coin, "faintly metallic" (*SF*, 126). Others, like the storekeeper, complain more directly about "them foreigners," but Quentin too seems

disturbed by the economic aspirations of the newly enfranchised — "Land of the kike home of the wop," he muses as he regards the child's face (*SF*, 125). The girl's foreignness to Quentin picks up an odd racial cast in his descriptions of her. He says that her "face was like a cup of milk dashed with coffee" (*SF*, 125). This epithet is used for only one other character in *The Sound and the Fury*, the pastor of the colored church, who is "of a light coffee colour" (*SF*, 293). Quentin repeatedly describes the immigrant girl's "black" looks (*SF*, 126, 128, 130, 133, 135), and I think that adjective points to a truculence and willfulness that has some basis in Quentin's view of blacks.

Jason extends this trope of economic and racial reversal as he seethes about the last of the Compsons having "to work all day long in a damn store" (*SF*, 207). His cracks about putting Benjy on the night shift or renting him to a sideshow underscore his outrage that the Compsons have fallen into the laboring class. Jason conceives of his misfortune in the South's only operative categories: slavery and mastery. Caroline can see that her son must "slave" his life away for the family's survival (*SF*, 181, 246). But the contradiction of Jason's outlook is that he denies his status as a slave to wage–earning even as he aspires to win back all that lost luxury and leisure. Jason sneers that unlike his father he hasn't got an office (*SF*, 182), yet he refuses to acknowledge that his privileged days have all but ended. Like a hard–pressed plantation owner, Jason complains about a kitchen full of "niggers to feed" (*SF*, 186) and simply refuses to do work that is beneath him, such as mounting the spare tire. He puts Earl on notice that, unlike his employer, Jason Compson will "never be a slave to any business" (*SF*, 210). Jason acts the part of the declined aristocrat, hoping to evade the paradox that in order to recover what he has lost, he must work like the dispossessed while behaving like the ruling class.

Such a contradiction accounts for Jason's railing at both the enjoyment of leisure and the exertions of labor. Jason indicts poor Negroes for their laziness and dependence ("let these dam trifling niggers starve for a couple of years, then they'd see what a soft thing they have," *SF*, 190–91). He cannot understand their abandonment of farmwork to see a show. Yet he also complains about the "damn foreigner" jews and insiders who trick hardworking honest investors like Jason out of their money. As the survivor of a ruling class, Jason recognizes only his own entitlement to leisure and to the fruits of others's labor.

The contradictions of the Compson brothers' minds display the contradictions of their class's ideology. Their shared sense that a world has been lost, that they are in the throes of a social upheaval, in fact conceals the mechanisms by which the dominant ideology retools itself for the new

age. That the Compsons understand their dispossession as a reversal means that they do not entertain any change in the categories of economic production or social arrangement. Negroes may become white, the poor wealthy, but life will still be organized by competition, racial differentiation, the enjoyment of leisure at the expense of others.

The Sound and the Fury represses this process on two fronts. In the first place it pretends that the old order, a South in which class, rank, and race were "natural" and uncomplicated, has disappeared forever. In fact, however, the ruling families of the old South busily occupy themselves in the world of *The Sound and the Fury* with the restoration of past fortune and privilege. The whole Compson household hushes while Quentin studies to make good on "Mother's dream" of going to Harvard, a year Quentin himself understands to be an expenditure of the dwindling resources calculated to win them back with interest. The gambit is little different from Jason's prospective job in Herbert Head's bank or his stock market efforts. Jason knows that blacks like his co–worker Job "cant stand prosperity or an easy job," and that one day you "have to lay them out with a scantling or something" (*SF*, 251). The spectre of violent recovery runs right through to the novel's end, when Jason springs out of his store to put a stop to his black boy's insubordination and his white brother's howl at reversal. That the novel concludes with "each in its ordered place" may suggest a recovery that is not entirely ironic.

Surely the Appendix confirms this trajectory. We learn that Jason Compson IV as of 1945 has worked his way from clerk to owner of a farmers' supply store and a buyer and dealer in cotton. C. Vann Woodward and other economic historians of the new South have observed the ways in which this lien system was the economic bane of agriculture in the new South. In many regions this system elevated a new group to privilege by allowing them to take over the means of agricultural production by extending credit or percentage arrangements to farmers. Sometimes former plantation owners themselves grabbed this new method of control over what the land produced, though more commonly newcomers like the Varners or Snopeses emerged. Jason for a while competes successfully with "internal immigrants" like the Snopeses, we are told in the Appendix. He does so by preying on the economically dependent, who turn out to be none other than "Negro Mississippi farmers."[11] Though the Compson line will end with the heirless Jason, *The Sound and the Fury* sees that the racial and economic structure of the new South resembles awfully its origins in what *Absalom, Absalom!* calls the "theater for violence and

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[11] See the Appendix "The Compsons" in *The Portable Faulkner*, ed. Malcolm Cowley (New York: Viking, 1944), 746.

injustice and bloodshed," where "the sheen on the dollars was not from gold but from blood" (*AA*, 250).

The Appendix and *Absalom, Absalom!* suggest the second way in which *The Sound and the Fury* proper represses contradictions, making the reality of history apparent between its lines. For if the dominant ideology conceals its governance of the new South by pretending its day has passed, so does that ideology's defense of antebellum life deny the economic and racial realities of agrarian slaveholding capitalism.[12] The fundamental contradictions of this world become the subject of Faulkner's conscious meditations on Southern history in *Absalom, Absalom!*. They have been most ably elucidated in Carolyn Porter's analysis of that novel. But in *The Sound and the Fury* the lessons of cultural injustice fall on deaf ears. At a few points in Quentin's section, for example, the prose crinkles on the verge of making a connection between the private obsession with Caddy's purity and the larger questions of the South. Quentin remembers his father remark that "*You will find that even injustice is scarcely worthy of what you believe yourself to be*" (*SF*, 132). A little later Quentin notices that the bakery lady looks like a librarian, custodian of "dusty shelves of ordered certitudes long divorced from reality, desiccating peacefully, as if a breath of that air which sees injustice done" (*SF*, 125). The novel here expresses the inhospitality of its pages to the history of injustice that everywhere seeks to contaminate it.

Like the whole novel, Quentin's mind remains oblivious to history. The student remembers daydreaming in class, until he is recalled by the teacher's sarcastic reproof: "'Tell Quentin who discovered the Mississippi River, Henry'" (*SF*, 88). One has only seven years to wait for another Henry, this one a Sutpen, to get Quentin to listen to things Mississippian. But in *The Sound and the Fury* history makes itself felt by being forgotten, by making itself into a background blur. We might return to that phrase, moreover, to notice that this attempt at framing does not after all succeed in defining its subject perfectly. Caddy's face "was a white blur framed out of the blur" (*SF*, 150). The repression of context by *The Sound and the Fury's* modernistic form practices a version of textuality in which the full implications of Caddy's white face are made to appear visible but indistinct. Into the fields opened by the text's absent frames, the sharp edges of ideological contradiction obtrude. The narrative structure refuses to contain what the rhetoric of the novel must.

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[12] The most illuminating discussion of Faulkner's relation to the new South's manufacture of antebellum gentility appears in Carolyn Porter, *Seeing and Being* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1981), 229–30 and *passim*.

Richard Godden (Keele)

Iconic Narrative: or, How Faulkner Fought the Second Civil War

I

What happens when at certain times and in certain places a particular crucifix is deemed to bleed? If one has small faith in miracles, but allows that investigators found no tube or duct, one is left with the belief of the witness. To speak of auto–suggestion, hallucination or neurosis may be to disguise the point. When an icon so convinces its observer that it is what it designates, it is merely an extreme version of what Frege calls the general tendency in language to shift from "sense" to "reference". In Paul Ricœur's terms, the bleeding cross exhibits "ontological vehemence,"[1] being so thrown forward into the world that it offers evidence on behalf of its own story. Arguably, blood does not flow from wood, ivory or plaster but from a narrative told and retold to the point of materialization. Saint Francis and Saint Teresa were perhaps consummate tellers of one story; such was their preoccupation with the Passion that their chosen text wounded them. The blood in the palms of Saint Francis is so compliant that it forms itself into the shape of nails; while Saint Teresa's heart, removed by surgeons at her death, carries a wide horizontal fissure[2] — in her autobiography the saint plainly describes her vision of an angel who thrust with a gold spear into her chest. Even supposing that in her case the surgeon slipped, or more generally that ecclesiastical witnesses blink and that therefore the relic in the shrine at Alba de Tormes is a forgery, nonetheless it and its postcards are iconic images whose essence is textual.

Allen Tate might have been offering a gloss on stigmatics when, in *The Fathers* (1938), he has his narrator Lacy Buchan, "passionately desire to hear the night":[3]

> And I think we do hear it: we hear it because our senses, not being mechanisms, actually perform the miracles of imagination that they themselves create; from our senses come the metaphors through which we know the world, and in turn

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1 Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 48.

2 For evidence on stigmatics see Herbert Thurston, *The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism* (London: Burns Oates, 1952); Saint Francis, 42–57; Saint Teresa, 68.

3 Allen Tate, *The Fathers* (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1974), 218. Subsequent references will be to this edition and will be included in the text.

> our senses get knowledge of the world by means of figures of their own making... To hear the night, and to crave its coming, one must have deep inside one's secret being a vast metaphor controlling all the rest: a belief in the innate evil of man's nature, and the need to face that evil, of which the symbol is the darkness... (Tate, 218–219)

Lacy Buchan is arguing by analogy from the source text *Genesis*. Fallen man sees in the "darkness" an iconic presentation of his lapsarian condition. So powerful is the ur–story that it shifts Virginia's secession, the event at the center of the novel, towards a second Fall from grace. Tate, writing in the late thirties, as the South experienced traumatic shifts in land ownership and labor organization (described by Jonathan Wiener as the second Civil War)[4] may have found some comfort in the iconic moment of his narrator's "controlling" metaphor. If so, three discrete falls — Adam's, Secession and the New Deal — condense into one plot, which is then further condensed into a metaphor whose vehicle is "the night." The understanding of two or perhaps three events within one perceptual act gives immense persuasive power and intrinsic concreteness to that act. What Lacy Buchan "hear[s]" is the sound of a repeated narrative as it produces a sensation in his mind's ear.[5] In Umberto Eco's terms, this sensory image of the night constitutes a form of perceptual cramp:

> At a certain point the iconic representation, however stylized it may be, appears to be more true than the real experience, and people begin to look at things through the glasses of iconic convention... [in a] sort of perceptual cramp caused by overwhelming cultural habits.[6]

The problem with Eco's cramping is that although it releases iconicity from the limited notion of dependency upon visual relationship, it is unhelpful about exactly how culture causes cramps. To return briefly to Lacy's night thoughts; Tate is involved in a particular kind of plotting — he creates a short series (Genesis – Secession – New Deal), within which history rapidly ceases to be what happened, and becomes what can be narrated. One thing after another is transformed into one thing because of another, all of which things back up behind, and are expressed by, the last

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4 Jonathan Wiener, "Class Structure and Economic Development in the American South, 1865–1955," *American Historical Review*, 84, 2 (1979), 970–1006.

5 It may be objected that I have turned "metaphor" into a synonym for icon: I do so because persuaded of their affinity by Paul Ricœur. He argues that metaphor is commonly spoken of in visual terms, as a "figure of speech" which "sets before the eyes," because the innovation that results from the interaction of its terms often takes a pictorial form; see Paul Ricœur, "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling," *On Metaphor*, ed. Sheldon Sacks (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 141–157. The realization of the pictorial within a metaphor may be brief, but Tate's new-critical interest in the verbal icon and poetic concreteness would suggest that metaphor's visual phase might matter for him.

6 Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (London: Macmillan, 1977), 205.

thing in the explanatory series. The novelist proceeds backwards from his own time (1938), canceling contingency by grasping events together in an absorbant configuration: as Louis Mink puts it, "there are no contingencies going backwards."[7] Tate's "synoptic judgements" produce "retrospective intelligibility" which if challenged will tend to prove itself merely by expanding its series.[8] The methodology is practised by some historians, but more generally by genealogists, etymologists and iconographers. In each case, the discovery that an item may be set in a series makes that item meaningful. As Panofsky has it, "iconology is a method of interpretation which arises from synthesis rather than analysis."[9] However, perhaps the purest exponents were the Church Fathers whose figural interpretations linked the Old Testament to the New. Moses and Joshua prefigure Christ, even as Christ *is* the Passover, "inasmuch as the Passover is a figure of Christ through the likeness of the saving blood and the flock."[10] No element in any series becomes an allegorical sign in that each is deemed to retain its own historicity. Auerbach's definition catches something of the multivalency of the figural character:

> Figural interpretation establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second encompasses or fulfills the first. The two poles of the figure are separate in time, but both, being real events or figures, are within time, within the stream of historical life. Only the understanding of the two persons or events is a spiritual act, but this spiritual act deals with concrete events whether past, present or future, and not with concepts or abstractions.[11]

II

The affinity between figural narrative and the iconic may perhaps best be illustrated by an appeal to an icon *in* a text rather than to theoretical accounts of textual iconicity. Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses* (1942) contains one explicit icon. In "Delta Autumn," an aging Ike McCaslin contemplates the contraction of the wilderness:

> He had watched it, not being conquered, destroyed, so much as retreating since its purpose was served now and its time an outmoded time, retreating southward

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7 Louis Mink, "Philosophical Analysis and Historical Understanding," *Review of Metaphysics*, 20 (1968), 686.

8 See Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, 155–61.

9 Edwin Panofsky, "Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art," *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), 58.

10 Tertullian, quoted by Erich Auerbach, "Figura," collected in his *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 29.

11 Auerbach, 53.

> through this inverted–apex, this ∇–shaped section of earth between hills and River until what was left of it seemed now to be gathered and for the time arrested in one tremendous destiny of brooding and inscrutable impenetrability at the ultimate funnelling tip. (*GDM*, 343)

It is tempting to label the shape "Virgin" and move on, however the presence of a geometrical figure on the printed page of a novel resists easy assimilation. Some might object that the shape is no more than a triangle standing for an area of land, but, just as we know that is not two grapes and a banana because of a species of selling that promotes "Nice Day(s)" with lapel badges, so ∇, in a Faulkner text, can be neither a triangle nor innocent. As the tree–line and hair–line elide, so, guiltily I draw in the anatomical signature ∇, only to erase it, recognizing that erasure is stipulated by Faulkner's repeated stories about unrupturable hymens.

The pudenda appear in the text to preserve the impenetrability of the land. However, since the Civil War that land had been systematically despoiled. The undeveloped South stood in a colonial relation to the developed North, providing raw materials and rawer labor in return for industrial goods imported at an unequal rate of exchange. During the thirties its dependent status as an "internal colony"[12] became more obvious. The 1926 crash in cotton prices initiated a spate of mortgage foreclosures which was to characterize the depression years, and constituted a structural shift in the patterns of ownership and pay. Banks and Insurance Companies repossessed small and "unproductive" units of land in order to centralize production. The dispossessed tenant became a casual wage laborer or a migrant. Roosevelt's victory (1932), with its extension of the State into the market via crop restrictions and relief programs, simply intensified the shrinkage of tenancy. Labor was redistributed away from the land and farm operations were increasingly mechanized, with a consequent transformation in the relationship between land and people. As casual labor replaced share–cropping, so "fathers" and "sons" vanished from the economic landscape. By the late 30s, armed with wage–labor, the typical new owner (be he the old owner, a Bank or an Insurance Company) no longer needed the delusion of parenthood (permitted by paternalism): indeed "children" were proving considerably more expensive than day laborers.

Faulkner counters what is in effect both an agricultural revolution and a revolution in social relations with a hymen — an iconic enclosure which isolates the land within a natural female function and then modifies that

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[12] Ernest Mandel, *Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1980), 90. See also Susan Willis, "Aesthetics of the Rural Slum: Contradictions and Dependency in 'The Bear,'" *Social Text*, 2 (Summer, 1979), 82–103.

function. Only the density of narrative concentrated within the hymeneal figure allows it to withstand the shock of the economic story.

The triangle is a female figure yet it designates an almost exclusively male space since the wilderness is a game reserve reserved for men. There is one significant breach of the male rule: Roth's octoroon mistress carries her child into the inner sanctum of the hunters' tent, but as though to counter the female principle she must enter dressed as a man, "in a man's hat and a man's slicker and rubber boots" (*GDM*, 357). She and her burden, Roth's child, are expelled North in part to protect the exclusively male–engendering that characterizes the triangle. Ike McCaslin, the last keeper of the figure, experiences a double birth which minimalizes female participation. In 1867 he is born of Sophonsiba Beauchamp and Theophilus McCaslin; however, since Sophonsiba achieves motherhood at an unnaturally late age and immediately vanishes from the text, his conception would seem to devolve onto a male couple whose nicknames, Buck and Buddy, divide gender responsibilities, even as their original names, Theophilus and Amodeus (in translation "God Lover"), imply a still more immaculate insemination. The second birth is emphatically miraculous. Ike is born again in the wilderness–womb from what looks suspiciously like a liaison between a man and a bear. As he enters the "impenetrable" woods for the first time:

> It seemed to him that at the age of ten he was witnessing his own birth. It was not even strange to him. He had experienced it all before, and not merely in dreams. He saw the camp — a paintless six–room bungalow set on piles above the spring high–water — and he knew already how it was going to look. (*GDM*, 195–6)
>
> If Sam Fathers had been his mentor and the backyard rabbits and squirrels his kindergarten, then the wilderness the old bear ran was his college and the old male bear itself, so long unwifed and childless as to have become its own ungendered progenitor, was his alma mater. (*GDM*, 210).

His first sight of mother is pure déjà–vu: "Sprawling, he looked up where it [the bear] loomed and towered over him like a thunderclap. It was quite familiar, until he remembered: this was the way he had used to dream about it" (*GDM*, 211).

Much of my case for Ike's dream of an alternative parentage is the commonplace of Faulkner scholarship. Critics, have not, however, pursued the perverse natal logic to its narrative source. As the child of an all male match (or matches), featuring God and/or a bear, Ike achieves an alternative genealogy and is thereby released from the miscegenated McCaslin line. The original miscegenator, his grandfather Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin, is displaced, nominally by Sam Fathers who will effectively die *as* the bear dies and at the hand of the bear's killer, and who is therefore an extension of the bear's spirit. Consequently, Sam Fathers is merely

a paternal surrogate who will teach the boy his true father. The task is made easier by Sam's own genealogical experience; Sam's Chickasaw name means Had–Two–Fathers, his biological father (Ikkemotubbe) copulated with a quadroon, and then married the pregnant woman to a slave. Sam is miscegenated three ways, and yet no guilt attends him, perhaps because his proximity to the unworked land (∇) excuses him from the tortured history of racial crossing as it grew from the Southern system of labor. More probably, his innocence is a genealogical and etymological trick which filters the "white" and "black" bloods out of him. Ikkemotubbe was also known as Du Homme/The Man. Given his poisonous behavior it is small wonder that he falls from the grace of his Indian title, to be called Doom. The most doomed man has to be Adam, consequently the history of the name suggests that Sam is Adam's son. If so, when Sam addresses buck or bear as "Oleh" ("Grandfather"), he is speaking directly to God. Where God is a grandfather and His spirit walks the earth in animal forms, the reader may be sure that the Delta contains the possibility of a prehistorical existence.

Ike is reborn, outside history, by means of figural interpretation — that is to say, the synoptic counter–series that I have been tracing results from a particular kind of historiography. Education according to Sam involves all manner of woodland skills, but its central lesson is serial perception. Ike is taught to perceive iconically and to recognize through the iconic sign a God–plot that leads straight to the Father. The lesson is well learned; in "The Bear," as he stands inside the ∇, at the grave where Sam and the bear fuse, Ike encounters a snake. He addresses it "without premeditation" as "Chief...Grandfather." The snake glides away:

> ... moving erect yet off the perpendicular as if the head and that elevated third were complete and all: an entity walking on two feet and free of all laws of mass and balance and should have been because even now he could not quite believe that all that shift and flow of shadow behind that walking head could have been one snake. (*GDM*, 329)

The movement is described with precision as simultaneously reptilian and upright: one snake contains post– and prelapsarian time because Ike's eye makes icons whose immediacy or "ontological vehemence" stems from deep plots. Again Auerbach best glosses this kind of imagination in his account of figural interpretation as:

> ... the idea that earthly life is thoroughly real ... but that with all its reality it is only *umbra* and *figura* of the authentic future, ultimate truth, the real reality that will unveil and preserve the *figura*. In this way the individual earthly event is not regarded as a definitive self–sufficient reality, nor as a link in a chain of development in which single events or combinations of events perpetually give rise to new events, but viewed primarily in immediate vertical connection with a divine order which encompasses it, which on some future day will itself be con-

> crete reality; so that the earthly event is a prophecy or *figura* of a part of a wholly divine reality that will be enacted in the future. But this reality is not only future; it is always present in the eye of God and in the other world, which is to say that in transcendence the revealed and true reality is present at all times, or timelessly.[13]

For years Faulknerians have debated the ethics of Ike's decision not to inherit,[14] but the structure of his imagination has been ignored. Ike's decision is neither moral nor political since it is not in any full sense a decision. As Sam's child Ike has been raised to live intuitively in a reversed world and to perceive "in immediate vertical connection with a divine order"; to revert to Eco's terminology, his is a state of perpetual perceptual cramp. In the much discussed fourth section of "The Bear," Ike does not argue a case for repudiation, he insists on theodicy. God *is* John Brown (*GDM*, 285) because Southern history, from Ikkemotubbe to Ike, has been a God–plot.

Ike's views are not Faulkner's, but the author shares his character's perceptual persuasion. The event that is generally read as exposing to Ike the irresponsibility of his repudiation, itself makes a figural case. When Roth's mistress enters Ike's tent with evidence of the continuity of racial crossing, she also evidences the genealogical persistence of the grandfather's seed. In June 1833 Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin's son Turl was born of his daughter Tomey ("*stars fell*" [*GDM*, 269]): in 1940 Roth Edmonds' son is born of a descendant of that match (in Europe an "Austrian paper–hanger" pulls things down [*GDM*, 339]). Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin has the last and vaguely apocalyptic laugh on Oleh. However, despite the shock of a repetition of miscegenated incest (albeit at many removes), Ike is not exposed to the reality of racial history, he is simply and devastatingly told that his figural series is inappropriate. The counter-series knocks the ontological stuffing out of him because of the vehemence of its own plot in which the sins of the patriarch recur from the first fall, through Lucius, to Roth. ∇ is ousted by ∇, where the second icon is black. This is racial nightmare rather than racial history. I am not here concerned to analyse the nightmare,[15] but to indicate that Ike's dream

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[13] Auerbach, 72.

[14] Among the latest expressions of this debate are the opposed essays of Louis Rubin and Richard King, collected by Doreen Fowler and Ann Abadie in *Faulkner and the Southern Renaissance* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1982). See particularly Rubin, "The Dixie Special," 63–92, and King, "Memory and Tradition," 138–157. Richard King's work has been generally useful though his model of the Southern family is rooted in an at times eccentrically ahistorical psycho–history. See *A Southern Renaissance: The Cultural Awakening of the American South 1930–1955* (London: Oxford University Press, 1980), particularly Ch. 2.

[15] See Eric Sundquist, *Faulkner: The House Divided* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 131-59.

of natal revision and the rude awakening engineered by Faulkner are designed on exactly the same historiographic principle.

The pervasiveness of the figural habit and of its iconic spin–offs may perhaps be conclusively seen in a reading of "Pantaloon in Black." The story concerns a black family having no genealogical links to the McCaslin lines, indeed reference to things McCaslin is minimal. Rider's wife, Mannie, dies. The husband's grief is overcome through a perverse form of self-extinction. The names are striking; Rider, understood by Faulkner as a synonym for a sexual athlete;[16] Mannie, a woman's name made from a male term and a potential play on "eye" and the first person pronoun. Rider's way of dying involves killing a white gambler for cheating, though his crooked dice have been recognized for years. The gambler's name, Birdsong, initially seems innocent, until, and with increasing insistence, the story reveals itself as an anthology of animals. Rider is a "horse" (*GDM*, 142), given to "wolfing" food (*GDM*, 144), who spends time in the "bull pen" (*GDM*, 158), and when drunk claims to be "snake-bit" (*GDM*, 152). He is attended by a large hound. Playful possibilities are released from names by the ambivalent tone of the narrative — a lynch story, featuring a giant, named for the disappointed lover in *commedia dell'arte*, whose animalism has less to do with racial typing (Beast) than with the land of fairy (when he drinks, whiskey springs "columnar and intact" from his throat; for him the air is "silver" [*GDM*, 148-49]). Fairy story crosses into gothic tale when Mannie's ghost appears, vampirically absorbing Rider's air and convincing him that he must lose his own body; "he could actually feel between them the insuperable barrier of that very strength which could handle alone a log" (*GDM*, 141). Rider's grief is explicitly and repeatedly presented as a compulsion to rejoin his wife. One attempt involves a self-mutilating act of strength; returning to the saw–mill, his place of work, Rider lifts a log:

> It was as if the unrational and inanimate wood had invested, mesmerized the man with some of its own primal inertia. Then a voice said quietly: "He got hit. Hit's off de truck," and they saw the crack and gap of air, watching the infinitesimal straightening of the braced legs until the knees locked, the movement mounting infinitesimally through the belly's insuck, the arch of the chest, the neck cords, lifting the lip from the white clench of teeth in passing.... "Only he aint gonter turn wid dat un," the same voice said. "And when he try to put hit back on de truck hit gonter kill him." But none of them moved. Then — there was no gathering of supreme effort — the log seemed to leap suddenly backward over his head of his own volition, spinning, crashing and thundering down the incline. (*GDM*, 145-46)

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[16] In *The Wild Palms* Faulkner has Charlotte say to her unwilling abortionist and "husband": "What was it you told me nigger women say? Ride me down, Harry" (*WP*, 221).

Attention is so focused on the log that "his volition" seems inaccurate; "*its* volition" attends, as an antonym, fusing the impersonal with the personal pronoun and miming Rider's desire to move from the animate to the inanimate (prefaced by his shift from the human to the animal). The means eventually chosen — rendering Birdsong inanimate — involves lynching, a choice which Rider must recognize is liable to lead to dismemberment. Faulkner notes that Rider's body is found "hanging from the bell–rope in a negro schoolhouse" (*GDM*, 154), no mention is made of its state, but its exemplary position at least implies mutilation. The ground is re–entered, possibly sans gender sign: that ground embodies Mannie. Parallels with the plots latent in ∇ are inescapable; just as Sam and Ike are linked to the bear (and Boon sleeps with Lion) so Rider (half man/half animal) recovers his identity (Man → I) via a penetration of what is simultaneously ∇, male and soil. The logic is figural; it appeals because the figural series (impacted in and expressed by the icon) discovers at its head or point of origin a strong patriarch. Rider, dying back into Mannie, re–enters a female earth which resembles Ike's chosen figure (the triangle). That triangular piece of virgin land containing Oleh or the grandfather as God (memories of a good father, rather than a bad or miscegenating father).

I have rehearsed several examples of a narrative logic which pervades *Go Down, Moses* in order to suggest that what looks at best like eccentricity and at worst like nonsense, is in fact the product of a habit of mind shared by Faulkner and Tate during the second Civil War. Ike's intuitively figural perception convinces him that he has "experienced it all before" (*GDM*, 195-96), a conviction which stems from his configurative training, since in any series each item receives its iconic specificity from the prior items, even as those items deprive it of its singularity. In temporal terms, recollection (often so embedded as to appear "innate") expels anticipation (the future) from perception (the present). The pastness of the present contains the future. These are the temporal habits of the backward glance whose esthetics arise from a figural and iconic persuasion. Put crudely — as he wrote the stories that make up *Go Down, Moses*, Faulkner may have experienced, in singleness of vision, a species of historical misrecognition that, in its turn, induced the cultural cramp from which grew the perceptual cramp that allowed him to resuscitate reasonably good fathers and sons on behalf of a land that no longer had need of either of them.

Pamela E. Rhodes (Durham)

"I Remember Them Letters": Byron Snopes and Interference[1]

> "Hush," he told her, "you'll spoil it."
> ... He refused to hear her breath as he refused to feel a bodily substance in his arms... "Be quiet," he told himself as much as her, "don't spoil it." (*SP*, 225)

Like Januarius Jones in my epigraph, much recent critical thinking has tried to empty words of material impurities: of content, context, origin, and history. In this short paper, I should like to put some of them back again. I choose Byron Snopes as my example, because his outpourings seem so intensely individual, so remote from any outer "reality." He speaks only for a line of poets perhaps (Byron citing Faulkner citing Swinburne); or, as lone letterwriter and lover, he enacts for us a pure and paradigmatic drama of language:

> "I am trying to forget you I cannot forget you Your big eyes your black hair how white your black hair will make you look. And how you walk I am watching you and a smell you give off like a flowr. Your eyes shine with mystry and how you walk makes me sick like a fever all night thinking how you walk. I could touch you you would not know it Every day. But I can not I must pore out on paper must talk You do not know who. Your lips like cupids bow when the day comes when I will press them to mine like I dreamed like a fever from heaven to hell. I know what you do I know more than you think I see men visting you with bitter twangs. Be careful I am a desprate man Nothing is any more to me now If you unholy love a man I will kill him.
>
> "You do not answer, I know you got it I saw one in your hand. You better answer soon I am a desprate man eat up with fever I can not sleep for. I will not hurt you but I am desprate. Do not forget I will not hurt you but I am a desprate man." (*FD*, 243–44)

All the same, I feel that it is hard, even here, to rid his voice of a presence which interferes with the formalist enterprise.

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[1] Virgil Beard (*FD*, 100) supplies my title. Of late, there has been little danger of anyone forgetting Bon's letters, which have been given a significant place in John T. Matthews, *The Play of Faulkner's Language* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1982), and Michel Gresset *Faulkner ou la fascination: I, Poétique du regard* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1982). Each of these unfolds an intricate reading to which I cannot address myself in detail here, even where my own argument tracks the same path; my general direction differs, however, in its attempts to trace Byron's complaints back into social history.

Introduced as a book–keeper and "hillman" (*FD*, 7) and returned finally to his origins, Byron gives shape to a plot which reaches into the long history of southern tenants and their discontents. In the South, the plantation had expanded, and had preserved itself after the Civil War, at the expense of the landless, non–slaveholding whites, who became an object class finding a mean existence on the meanest of lands, on soils made poorer yet by the small farmer's gripping financial and technical incapacity. As the increase in tenancy accelerated, so too did rural poverty. Since the miseries of the system have been well documented, the situation at the time of the novel's setting (Spring 1919 to Summer 1920) may perhaps be most concisely summarized in the observations of two of Faulkner's contemporaries. Thomas D. Clark's, a southern retrospective, is the more impassioned:

> The roll of credit failures, forced mortgage sales, bankruptcies, and heartless enslavement of men lengthened with each succeeding year. Tenantry became synonymous with peonage, and by 1920 the cotton South faced stark economic and social failure.
>
> The disastrous increase in tenants in the 1920s ... threatened the entire southern agricultural system with bankruptcy. Never before were there so many landless farmers, or so great a mire of rural poverty.[2]

Clark reminds us that for Mississippi, where some six out of seven of the populace lived in the country, and for its tenant farmers in particular, the hardship following the general collapse of the cotton market in December 1920 was unprecedented and despite spasmodic recoveries in prices, there was to be little economic improvement throughout the decade — indeed, some tenants, entirely dependent on the cash crop, were to see no actual money in the period.

Ray Stannard Baker's account is slightly more patronizing, as the journalist presents the scene to his Northern readers:

> In 1918 and 1919 ... landowners and tenants had a taste of a better way of life, more of the common decencies and comforts, a better chance to educate their children, a little glimpse beyond the horizon of their dull ordinary lives. It is true there was great wastage ... for example, a tremendous automobile invasion of the South, but everywhere I have found new houses, new barns, new roof paint, better roads, schoolhouses, churches, and better farm machinery. I visited certain neighborhoods where for the first time there have been glimpses of the

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2 Thomas D. Clark, *The Emerging South*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 41, 15. This historian shared Faulkner's background: a native Mississippian, six years younger than Faulkner, he graduated at the University of Mississippi, and, at the time Faulkner was writing *Flags* they would meet on the local golf course where Clark was an undergraduate greenskeeper — unfortunately, history was never part of the conversation: "Our world was strictly the nether side of golf, keeping up the fairways, greens, and finding lost balls," *William Faulkner of Oxford*, ed. James V. Webb and A. Wigfall Green (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), 68–76.

> comforts which are the common necessities of farm life in the North: home water supply, plumbing, proper lighting, washing machines, better furniture, musical instruments, telephones.
>
> ... and now the curtain seems to be dropping upon that pleasant scene and they feel themselves head back toward the old morass of crop lien farming — a kind of slavery to merchants and bankers.[3]

With returns on cotton per acre the highest in 1919 since the Civil War decade, and a crash imminent, Faulkner locates his novel in a time which threatens precipitous change, since — as many believed — for the South, "the great revolution started with the end of the crop year 1920."[4] Baker's final paragraph pinpoints this crisis which is the immediate future in the novel, and clarifies some of the currents of antagonism in its plotting by underlining, in particular, the accumulated resentments of the tenant and defining as his traditional enemies, the merchants, the bankers, and the richest planter–landowners.

Faulkner allows this resentment direct utterance in the text, in the drinking episode behind the ruined barn (*FD*, 122–29). The conversation is silky with accusatory politeness as Suratt insists on young Captain Sartoris' title, and parades an ironic deference to the fancy manners of the well–born, until he at last becomes more direct:

> "... I swo' then, come what mought, that I wouldn't never plant nothin' in the ground, soon's I could he'p myself. It's all right for folks that owns land, but folks like my folks was dont never own no land, and ever' time we made a furrow, we was scratchin' earth for somebody else."....
>
> ".... I was raised a pore boy, fellers, while Mr Bayard's folks has lived on that 'ere big place with plenty of money in the bank and niggers to wait on 'em." (*FD*, 126–7)

But the issue never quite takes fire. In the sequence itself, the loving cup of moonshine whiskey heals all sense of difference; it becomes one of the more bizarre versions of the several Grecian urns in the novel, offering the truth and beauty of liquor to unite all men of whatever origin, dissolving the merely temporal separations of society. In these circumstances, Bayard hears "Suratt's voice without listening to it" (*FD*, 126), and Faulkner makes the voice itself "slow" and "plausible ... without any irritant quality. It seemed to fit easily into the still scene, speaking of earthy things" (*FD*, 126). Given this, the episode softens, too, because Faulkner

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[3] Ray Stannard Baker, *New York Evening Post*, March 8, 1921, cited in Rupert P. Vance, *Human Factors in Cotton Culture* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1929), 139–40. See also Arthur M. Ford, *Political Economy of Rural Poverty in the South* (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger, 1973); Roger Ransom and Richard Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom. The Economic Consequences of Emancipation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Jonathan M. Wiener, *Social Origins of the New South, Alabama, 1860–1886* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1978).

[4] Clark, *The Emerging South*, xvi.

himself temporizes with this voice, allowing a reader, as well, to listen and not hear.

In a "still scene," from the heart of Faulkner's lyrics, social forces seem in little danger of emerging into consciousness. Although he marks the rusting tools and barren ground, Faulkner buries and anneals the wounding moment of recognition, shifting the overt content from agricultural decay to esthetic pastoral in distinctly reassuring stylistic gestures. As he can make a frieze even of Suratt's Adam's apple while drinking (*FD*, 124), he has little trouble artistically in putting a secure distance between the reader and the discomforting details of owner, labor and land relations, and the social divisions they produce.

Even the "country idiom" (*FD*, 126) is not abrasive, cotton–wadded as it is by language which assumes the conventionally wider reference of writer and reader. Beside the general poetic ambience which brackets off the instant, his specific painterly and literary allusions (to some Impressionist poplars, "pale as absinthe" [*FD*, 122], for example) come into play to interpose between the eye and its object the reader's and novelist's shared culture — like his non–Southern readers, perhaps, the author, too, had seen Paree, and that like Dr. Alford (his Corot reproduction on the wall; *FD*, 84) he had the right professional equipment to extricate himself from the cultural distresses of his own origins.

This dissociation, even at the moment of awareness, passes into the narrative with his choice of Suratt as spokesman: a sewing–machine agent, who drives the group to and from the secret spring in his business van, with its painted advertisements, is now as far from "folks like my folks was" as Bayard himself — a comprador for city capital (if not a "Seurat" supplying a picnic site?). In this, Faulkner makes the words where the classes meet less of a threat of social change than a toast to arriviste success. The episode ends with tonal equilibrium restored: the land is "unemphatic" and "upon the green afterglow in the west a column of smoke stood like a balanced plume" (*FD*, 129) — a perfect Paterian still flame, perhaps, or a tranquil, poised poet's quill?

Similarly, in the descriptions of the black Sartoris tenants singing happily at their sorghum mill (*FD*, 267–9), or in the details of the feudal Sartoris bank, there may be very little to suggest that the time depicted was at the very edge of the coming depression. Nothing might seem further from the minds of the depositors (or readers), "people ... happy with their orderly affairs," as the cashier (and writer) swap "jovial anecdote" (*FD*, 249), than the current warnings about over–production;[5] but, while

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[5] George B. Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South, 1923–45* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), 113; in Spring 1919, sixty members of Congress traveled through the Cotton Belt urging members to reduce acreage, and the following month, the

many of the goods in Jefferson's flush times seem to spring out of some Golden Age, Faulkner gives others a more precise economic provenance in the post–war prosperity described by Baker, and, accordingly, the future of the merry morning's takings within the novel becomes imbued with the future of money in the rural South in the twenties.

In the Snopes/Sartoris story in particular, the contextual force of the narrative makes it harder to muffle the historical accusations active in the language. In imagining a bookkeeper and hillman, who performs his duties while watching a planter–banker, "constantly and covertly all the while he was in view" (*FD*, 7), Faulkner draws into the novel perhaps the sharpest populist issue of the day: the farmers' repeated demand for credit. Denied money, most formally in the anti–inflation policies of the Federal Reserve Board late in 1919, rural Southerners felt themselves to be the victims of banker–merchants exercising a specific "credit conspiracy," which became known as "the Great Conspiracy," the "Crime of '20."[6] Although such theories were nothing new to the small farmer with a populist turn of mind (suspicion of the railroad trusts had preceded suspicion of finance), here in sharp focus was a visible means of oppression — the withholding of credit — exercised by the banker–merchant, as the visible agent of the more mysteriously malign powers elsewhere.

Byron's private torments form part of this larger story:

> By changing his position a little he could see old Bayard, could catch a glint of his white suit where he sat oblivious in the door. There was a sort of fascination in the old fellow now, serving as he did as an object upon which the Snopes could vent the secret, vicarious rage of his half–insane mind. And all during the morning he watched the other covertly; once old Bayard entered the cage and passed within arm's length of him, and when he moved his hand to wipe his drooling mouth, he found that the page had adhered to his wrist, blotting the last entry he had made. (*FD*, 249–50)

Faulkner's structures in the novel as a whole suggest that longing is never entirely single–minded, that emotions rarely operate in a closed circuit between lover and object, and that desire is seldom a pure state generated by gazing on that object alone; in moving, here, from an interior stage,

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"Cotton Acreage Reduction Convention" brought 2,000 delegates together in New Orleans. Faulkner uses Harry Mitchell, in particular, cotton–speculator as well as betrayed husband, to insert fashionable consumer goods into the novel: his ornate sport shoes (*FD*, 174), for example, whose price Faulkner upped as he went on (in the manuscript they begin at $14,00 a pair but, a page later, inflation takes them up six dollars; Typescript, Alderman Library, University of Virginia 6074, Item 3b) – a nice contrast with the Colonel's shoes, made for him, twice a year, by a house in St. Louis (*FD*, 20). The rash of cars in Jefferson, and even the mail–order dresses of the young girls (*FD*, 108) provide further examples, manufactured imports rather than the crafted products of traditional firms in the South.

6 Tindall, *The Emergence of the New Youth*, 112–113; see, too, "Agriculture and the Recurrent Crisis," 111–142.

Byron's feverish images of Narcissa and "another" (*FD*, 249), to an exterior one, where the glint in his eye is the Colonel's white suit, Faulkner extends his theatre to the historical intrigue, where planter and hillman, like master and black slave, coexist in tense interdependency. In the Sartoris tradition, Colonel Bayard is a guardian of threshholds which would admit social change; where Colonel John blocked black ballots, and his carven eyes watch over his valley and railroad, his son sits in the door of the bank, generous to favored clients, conveniently deaf when it suits him, presiding over the capital through which that family property was accumulated and the small farmer excluded.

Historians have emphasized that it was the distribution of capital which fixed the class divide in the South. The continual debarment from the money perpetuated the pattern of land–occupancy and developed in Southern hillmen the ignorance, low productivity and thriftlessness that hereditists claimed were bred in the bone; and, as it had in the stirrings of populism, it was perception of these relationships that contributed to the incipient politicization of the rednecks as a class group, and the rise of leaders from among them in the first quarter of the century. As Albert D. Kirwan concluded: "Throughout the period from 1876 to 1925 the central thread in Mississippi politics [was] a struggle between economic classes, interspersed with the personal struggles of ambitious men."[7] What Colonel Sartoris' bookkeeper pours out as personal emotion, then, comes to express wider public disturbances, as he embodies that whole group of social forces which formalist esthetics ignores — not a romantic Byron, but a sullen Snopes, the silent redneck, the excluded other, through whom the plantation defined itself and whom it preferred to forget.

Faulkner's own social position, perhaps, enters into his stylistic practices. Producing Byron initially as an "inflectionless voice" (*FD*, 6), a "disembodied face" (*FD*, 7), he offers us a presence with which he is uneasy, marginalizing it, even as he materializes it. There is an inverse parallel in the way he styles the man in terms of importunate and alarming physicality, like some lurid exemplum from 1920s eugenicist propaganda:

> He took Narcissa's check, and while she listened to Miss Jenny ..., she remarked beneath the brim of her hat his forearms, from which the sleeves had been turned back, and the fine, reddish hair which clothed them down to the second joints of his fingers; and ... she remarked with a faint distinct distaste and a little curiosity, since it was not particularly warm today, the fact that his arms and hands were beaded with perspiration. (*FD*, 93)[8]

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[7] Albert O. Kirwan, *Revolt of the Rednecks, Mississippi Politics,1876–1925* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press: 1951), 306. See also Roger W. Shugg, *Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana* (1939; rpt. Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1966), 76–120.

[8] See Lothrop Stoddard, *The Revolt Against Civilization* (London: Chapman and Hall, Ltd.,

The overtones here — the telling "clothed," for instance — indicate that the true Snopes costume is still the ape–man's naturally thick and hairy skin, while the precision of the demarcation line impresses the mind with the highly hereditary nature of the Snopes features: "reddish" hair alone might go without remark; in combination with the more specialised genetically dominant trait of the hirsute second joint, it draws specific attention to Byron's ancestry (rude, simian even, physically overbearing) and to his future offspring (the white, possibly leisured hands, all stamped with the telltale marks of misalliance). It needs a predatory Joan Heppleton, or a tiger, to revitalize Horace Benbow with the blood of his origins: "a thing these many generations politely dormant waked shrieking, and again for a red moment he dangled madly by his hands from the lowermost limb of a tree" (*FD*, 291). In Byron, the atavistic type has a living representative, a version of Darwin's "hairy quadruped"[9] attempting to climb the tree into a social order and civilized forms he cannot, by nature, maintain.

But though Faulkner shares some of the vocabulary of eugenicist agitprop, his hesitancies suggest that he does not entirely share its assumptions: in *Flags in the Dust*, a reference to an individual's "sense of inferiority" (*FD*, 249) may evoke wider determinants, less moral or biological than economic.[10] But *Flags in the Dust* is no self–conscious tract, populist or patrician. As with the novel's black characters and its women, in Byron Faulkner writes out confusions and contradictions.[11] *Flags in the Dust* as a whole prevaricates with its hillman's story: but even in burying it in a sub–plot, displacing it at points of pressure, making it vanish in sleights

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1925), 87–8, for a description of the perilous virility and "highly hereditary" degeneracy which characterise the "feeble–minded" "Under–Man" who threatens civilization. The Snopes family tree, spreading vigorously in Faulkner's later works, could bear out his argument. (I have not conducted a search for other hairy–handed Snopeses in its branches, but note Mink's "gaunt black–haired fingers" [*H*, 247]. However, there are similar fingers, though not specifically related, in *Sanctuary: The Original Text*, ed. Noel Polk [London: Chatto and Windus, 1981], 174, belonging to the doctor at Miss Reba's — one of the most repulsive creatures in the novel.)

9 Richard Hofstader's words: "Religious readers pointed with horror at Darwin's too vivid description of man's ancestor as 'a hairy quadruped, furnished with a tail and pointed ears, probably arboreal in habits,'" *Social Darwinism in American Thought*, rev. ed. (New York: George Braziller, 1959), 25.

10 In Stoddard's account, it is the (conveniently constant) deficiency of the "germ–plasma" which perpetuates the "unhappy lot" of the Under–Man, and its superiority which provides the creative energies from which civilizations spring, *The Revolt Against Civilization*, 2–3. See Clark, *The Emerging South*, 10–23, for rather different reasons, cultural and economic, for the poor white's debilities.

11 I discuss one strand of this mesh in, "Who Killed Simon Strother, and Why?: Race and Counterplot in *Flags in the Dust*," *Faulkner and Race: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1986*, ed. Doreen Fowler and Ann J. Abadie (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1987), 93-110.

of style, and cutting it off to leave the ending free for the Sartorisés, it can never quite clear itself of the traces; and cannot, perhaps, because the text itself is precipitated out of the attempt. Though discussion wrenches word and world apart, history is not some inert and detachable mass of data which the text crudely reflects, but is part of the words and of the structure, generating within them active debate about the social relations out of which they arise.

With Byron's rage, Faulkner brings financial and emotional affairs, economic and linguistic figures, into intimate connection. That it is while Narcissa is handing over a cheque that the lover perspires so visibly and sticks to the writing pad might seem merely incidental; by the time he drools, sweats and smears the ledger as the Colonel comes near him, the money seems less an accessory than an essential ingredient of the sexual heat.[12]

Byron's plot both parades and revenges his class's impotence, combining deliberated and improvised details to clarify a number of equivalences. Writing this last letter, working in the grilled cage where he adds up his ledgers, after all the secrecy, Byron puts himself on display (he raises the shade and turns on the light), setting up a theater which presents the reader with the conditions of understanding:

> Here passers could see him, could have watched him for several minutes as he bent over his desk, writing slowly. It was his final letter, in which he poured out his lust and his hatred and his jealousy, and the language was the obscenity which his jealousy and desire had hoarded away in his temporarily half–crazed mind and which the past night and day had liberated. (*FD*, 253)

Omitting the text itself, Faulkner again both evokes and suppresses it, leaving the reader to imagine the grievances of those who have waited long enough. Composing a message in his own hand, Byron seems at last to throw aside all covers. While Faulkner marks how Byron loses his sense of himself, until "he found himself gazing at his idle hands on the desk before him as though they were not his hands" (*FD*, 218), there is more than textuality at issue here, perhaps, if his writing is not so much a loss of self–presence[13] as an effort of self–representation. Whereas writ-

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[12] Writing in the ledger, Byron is precisely placed to note the play of power, in the record of those granted credit and those refused. For the importance of the ledger, in early plantation banks (a type the Sartoris place perpetuates) see Fritz Redlich, *The Molding of American Banking* (New York and London: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1968), 185–6. T. S. Stribling would highlight the special function of the ledger in the merchandise counter in *The Store* (London: Heinemann, 1932), 83, 108. Faulkner's own hand has been found in the ledger of his grand–father's bank in Oxford, and even if he did little work as a bookkeeper there in early 1916, he may have gathered something of its significance; Thomas E. Lamar, "Debits and Credits in Faulkner's Hand Found in Old Bank Ledgers," *The Faulkner Newsletter*, ed. William Boozer (The Yoknapatawpha Press, July–September, 1981).

[13] Matthews, *The Play of Faulkner's Language*, 55.

ing in the ledger, in another man's book, induces "a sort of stupor" (*FD*, 250), the obscene final letter and the manner of its delivery suggest a measure of self–reclamation, the nearest Byron can come to showing himself as an active agent, who carries despair into protest, as he acts out a substitute possession of the prohibited property. Failing in the claim of the earlier missive, "Every day I can put my hand out and touch you you do not know it" (*FD*, 99), he at last stretches his hand out to the money instead.

In the scheme's two broadest phases, to visit Narcissa's house then return to burgle the bank, Faulkner focuses attention on the capital annexed by the planter–banker, the property which perhaps represents the real robbery. Narcissa, too, is part of this property: within a narrative of heritage and social rivalries, the pure object of desire, the white lady of the lyrics (a blank sheet for a poet to compose upon?), becomes the certificate of a line's continuance. With the first bride dead (Caroline — also, impeccably, "White"), Narcissa, as Miss Jenny knows (*FD*, 78), is vital to produce the Sartoris heir. In desiring her as the sum of all value, Byron finds that value confirmed in her overt acquisition by the Sartoris estate, for which, like money, she is both the sign and the means of perpetuating a title to land and privilege — "Adultery ... he could have borne; but this, boldly, in the world's face, flouting him with his own impotence" (*FD*, 249). The Snopes is dispossessed on every count: it is the planter who can reproduce himself and his class because he holds the means of growth — the seeds for crops of various kinds in bank–vault, land, and womb. Byron's double trespass, then, on bedroom and bank, dramatizes these equations where planter excludes hillman in each term.

If Narcissa's child, who holds the future, is a Sartoris and the planter's history is the prominent one in the novel, it dominates at the price of the suppressed story of such men as the landless Snopes; but, returning in what seems a random scattering of details, that story throws into the narrative the shadow of an alternative heritage. Few readers fail to note the suggestive intimacy of Narcissa's hiding–places: she puts Byron's letters in the front of her dress (*FD*, 58), the "blue satin maw" of her bag (*FD*, 93), the drawer with her underwear (*FD*, 255). When these hints of illicit intercourse mingle in a reading with the pervasive textual references to cross–breeding,[14] the impressions begin to add up into a sub–plot of

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[14] Although Faulkner was actually at sea, on board the "West Ivis," during the Scopes trial in July 1925, in *Flags in the Dust*, like *Mosquitoes*, the novel written immediately after this event, evolutionary arguments enter the general debate about cross–breeding and change, and burgeoning and declining historical lines: see the set–pieces on Ethel the fox and General's puppies, the address to the mule, and the arrival of the significantly named Snopes clan, or, in lesser variants, the experimental plane at the Dayton, Ohio, test airfield (*FD*, 356), or the adaptiveness of the horse–trader (*FD*, 117–9), whose profit now comes from the insurance on beasts run over by the railroad agency. Miss Jenny is the novel's supreme

metaphorical insemination, as Byron fathers the future out of an intactness already broken — where Snopes preempts Sartoris, as the judge's daughter loses her virginity to the hillman before any legitimate union with the planter's son. Byron's paternity is accomplished, perhaps, when his hidden eyes stare into Narcissa's in the dark (*FD*, 140), or (more probably) in his forcible entrance into her bedroom shortly before her marriage. The sexual landscape of defloration needs little mapping (*FD*, 254–6) — Snopes approaches Narcissa's house through the dark and ever narrowing lane, massed with sweet honeysuckle, enters it by gently forcing the screen with his knife blade, and leaves to the accompanying smashing of a glass flower pit — and what takes place in the room works through similarly broad effects. Since Narcissa discovers the loss of her correspondence and reads the obscene letter "the day before her wedding" (*FD*, 284), Faulkner's timing is suggestive, and as at least one critic has pointed out, if the letters embody a form of passion, the consummation is hinted at again when Narcissa recollects the theft in "There Was a Queen": "it was like I was having to sleep with all the men in the world at the same time."[15]

In *Flags in the Dust* in the chapter following the robbery, we perhaps glimpse the consequences, again in an indirect and flickering moment:

> ... and at last Narcissa saw the creature in the pool of the flashlight, lying on its side in a grinning curve, its eyes closed and its pink, baby–like hands doubled against its breast. She watched the motionless thing with a little loathing — such a contradiction, its vulpine, skull–like grin and those tiny, human–looking hands, and the long, rat–like tail of it. (*FD*, 273)

This cornered possum gives me pause. For one thing, there is something about the description that may remind a reader both of the occasions which have seen Narcissa repelled and fascinated similarly by men (Snopes

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eugenicist, an expert in "shoots and graftings" (36) — note her rebuke to Narcissa about Horace's flourishing affair with Belle (*FD*, 193), and her concern that corn and lespedeza (unsuitable utilitarian crops) should not come up in a hyacinth bed. If Narcissa is a piece of stock for maintaining the purity of the plantation, it is only after the pregnancy is assured that Jenny apologises to its mother for her part in the matchmaking (*FD*, 283). In *Flags in the Dust*, the white–planter eugenics are the ones at the surface, in the "Sartoris" plot; the black and poor–white prospects form the suppressed debate I am discussing. 1918–1925 were the years when various fundamentalist controversies developed. See Mark H. Hall, *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1963); Stow Persons, ed., *Evolutionary Thought in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, Archon Books, 1968); Kenneth M. Ludmerer, *Genetics and American Society: A Historical Appraisal* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972); Norman F. Furniss, *The Fundamentalist Controversy, 1918–31* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954); Ray Ginger, *Six Days or Forever? Tennessee v. John Thomas Scopes* (Boston: Beacon Hill, 1958).

As Elnora concludes in "There Was a Queen" (*CS*, 734), "I just say to let quality consort with quality, and unquality do the same thing."

[15] Matthews, *The Play of Faulkner's Language*, 56, n. 87; *CS*, 739–40.

and Sartoris), and — in the imagery of the piece — of the men themselves. Then, too, there is the way Faulkner presents the creature in terms of a human child, or rather, given the details of its posture and the tentative qualifiers ("human–looking," "baby–like"), as a potential child, a human embryo. Since we are looking, briefly, from Narcissa's viewpoint, there is an added force to the likeness if, at this stage of the narrative, the Sartoris heir is already expected. An appeal to chronology permits the possibility, Faulkner having implanted the seed of the notion, in the reader, at any rate, in the previous section. Whether it is remembered actively at this point or not, it is latent in a reading and curiously coexistent with the third element of the passage, the horror of "contradiction"; an evolutionary eccentric in any case, this particular marsupial displays all the nastiness of cross–breeding in its disquieting collocation of features, of fox, rat and man. Like the colonial house ravaged by hillman and entrepreneur, the conservative design gives way to "architectural garbling" (*FD*, 21), and all this, then, draws into the narrative the fascination and terror of social diversity where the self is all evolutionary possibility, scattered in an indefinite sequence of potential class relations.

That all this takes place on the level of figuration should be no objection: as recent criticism has emphasized,[16] even in the earliest Faulkner, the gaze can penetrate and violate; *Mosquitoes* has Mrs. Maurier's strange inner swelling; *The Sound and the Fury,* Benjy's "bluegum" story. If Byron's interference changes the woman he stares at, it allows into the narrative the shape of an unspeakable ending. Where the look of the planter connects woman and money as signifying units of exchange, which enable him to sustain himself and his world, so in taking the bank notes, as in "taking" Narcissa, Byron dramatizes an alternative script for the future. In "There Was a Queen," Narcissa's vision of herself as an ubiquitous sexual partner makes her "wild": it is the social diversity of the men who actually "know" her which makes the invasion so frightening, so much more than a neurotic private nightmare; and to Elnora and Miss Jenny, certain of their social categories, custodians of the plantation values, Narcissa is, indeed, the trash which lets chaos in.

If Narcissa's baby is conceived while the stresses of the relationship are still active in the text (and her marriage is a "ghost–ridden dream", *FD*, 285), the plot becomes blocked in imagining diversity. The ghostly mutant embryo — a Byronic bluegum — is terminated; Byron is dismissed from the novel, his seed spent, his dangerous vitality bleeding away, and is replaced by the altogether more consoling fantasy of the yeoman MacCallums.[17] Even in town, the robbery causes no rumpus, and after the

[16] See particularly, Michel Gresset, *Faulkner ou la fascination.*

[17] Bayard's subsequent visit to the black cabin perhaps obscurely compensates for the occlusion.

protests, told straight or slant, sexual, financial and class frustrations lapse into silence.[18] The child who inherits the story lies, at the end, in the center of discussion only of Benbow and Sartoris blood — a conflict which is narrowly a matter of refinement, not revolution, especially as, in a final mythic flourish, Faulkner presents baby Benbow almost as the product of a virgin birth.

"Who cares about an old Snopes, anyway?" Narcissa asks (*FD*, 155). Faulkner does care, but he is not sure what to do with that anxiety and smooths over the symptoms. But even in working on the original *Sanctuary*, some fifteen months later, he is still thinking about Byron and Byron's world. The story is twice summoned up by Horace Benbow, who, brooding on his sister's past, brings the "forgotten" letters specifically to mind.[19] Horace persists in turning Narcissa into a lyric, again viewing her as a white sheet of paper and as peaceful land, at a time when such property was most in question. His images recall Marietta of *The Marionettes*, the nymphs of the verse, the trees and quiet pool of "April" or, in the sonnet "Bill," Helen, who holds all silence in herself. The reader's memory may be more sceptical: Narcissa, like her mother, has "that abounding serenity as of earth" (*FD*, 60), but the simile stays serene only if semantically and politically troublesome elements are firmly held down. We know that the man who wins Narcissa gains a sign whereby to underwrite his meanings, conserving or redesigning property relations and social distinctions. In *Sanctuary*, we see her enacting her part, as the arbiter of boundaries and the voice of social purity. The novel's first version, especially, is only too aware of how society cleanses itself after filthy "mixing": marginal voices are suppressed and betrayed, words are erased of their disturbing associations, and two possums and a cat in a barrel burn into the mind a terrifying emblem of the dangers of crossed categories.

But when we "remember them letters," we may recall a canceled historical alternative, hearing in Byron's compulsive urge to "pore" himself

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[18] The prospect of Vardaman or Debs in the White House remains as drinking–talk in the back room of the store (*FD*, 112), Vardaman was himself the son of a small farmer. Faulkner's family were involved, via John T. Falkner, Jr., in politics of the "New Men" in Mississippi (see Joseph Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography* [London: Chatto and Windus, 1974], 172–3, 244, 340–1). The mention of Debs supplies another silenced revolutionary voice at the edge of the novel. An advocate of strikes, and strongly against exactly the kind of war heroics celebrated by the Sartorises, Debs had been indicted by the federal government for disloyalty and for attempts to cause subordination and mutiny. His defence stressed the issue of free speech, saying that in times of great change in history, the minority is usually right. At the period covered in this part of the novel, Debs was in prison in Virginia (he was ordered there on April 13, 1919). See Bernard J. Brommel, "Militant Pacifist," *Eugene V. Debs* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1978), 147–158.

[19] *Sanctuary: The Original Text*, ed. Noel Polk (New York: Random House, 1981), 17, 74.

out on paper, homophonic reverberations of all his "desprate" "twangs" where the play of words awakes not endless *différance*, but the history in the unconscious of the text: the red pores sweating over Narcissa and "pawing" her surrogates — bank notes, underwear, Minnie Sue (*FD*, 259); the redneck's wasted words and wasted seed poured out in Narcissa's bedroom; the poor white hand ("raised a pore boy") working for the planter banker to turn away the hired tenant hands of his own kin; the man poring over the final letter which registered the rage of his dispossession.

Wiping the floor clean of his bloody prints, Byron considerately leaves no stain of himself or his class. In the litany of the Sartoris doom, Faulkner registers dissonance, identifies the voices, allows their brief emergence, then equivocates; we may hear a southern tragedy, but we can forget it again — remembering, according to taste, perhaps a private crisis, a verbal drama, or a narrative trope from a conservative rhetorician. And once Byron is out of the story, Faulkner silences those other echoes in a closure now famous for its harmonics, the stylistic balm for the unthinkable: in a "windless lilac dream, foster–dam of quietude and peace" (*FD*, 370), there is no history to spoil it.

Peter Nicolaisen (Flensburg)

Group Perspective and Group Behavior: Notes on Faulkner's "Forensic Imagination"

A sense of communal presence has often been recognized as a distinguishing trait of Faulkner's fiction.[1] Few novelists have established this presence, against the background of which we view the fate of individual characters like Emily Grierson, Thomas Sutpen, Flem Snopes or Joe Christmas, as frequently and persistently as Faulkner. The technique he most often employs — that of using a communal group such as "the town," "the countryside," or simply an anonymous "they" as a kind of Jamesian reflector — would seem to be an appropriation of what in drama is the time–honored device of the chorus. Whether such groups appear in the role of the actual narrator, as they do in "A Rose for Emily," for instance — "We did not say she was crazy then. We believed she had to do that" (*CS*, 124)[2] — or as witnesses observing an event, their effect upon the narrative is basically the same. They add a public dimension to what would otherwise appear as something private and personal; by their presence the individual and his fate are given a public, communal echo. Poets have sometimes used similar techniques, E.A. Robinson for instance, in poems like "Eros Turannos" or "Richard Cory." Among novelists, Faulkner may well have drawn upon Sherwood Anderson, in whose *Winesburg, Ohio* there is a strong sense of the town's collective presence. Joseph Conrad may have furnished another example with such novels as *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, *Victory* or, to a lesser extent, *Nostromo*.

From what we know about Faulkner's biography, the interest in groups and collectives of various kinds reflected in his fiction comes as a sur-

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1 See Carl Benson, "Thematic Design in *Light in August*" [1954], reprinted in *William Faulkner: Four Decades of Criticism*, ed. Linda W. Wagner (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1973), 258–72; Cleanth Brooks, *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), esp. 47–74; Cleanth Brooks, "The Sense of Community in Yoknapatawpha Fiction," *University of Mississippi Studies in English*, 15 (1978), 3–18; Joseph W. Reed, *Faulkner's Narrative* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), esp. 14–20 and *passim*; Hugh M. Ruppersburg, *Voice and Eye in Faulkner's Fiction*(Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983), *passim*; Wolf Kindermann, *Analyse und Synthese im Werk William Faulkners: Generation and "community" in der Entwicklung seines Denkens* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1984), *passim*.

2 About Faulkner's narrative strategies in "A Rose for Emily" see esp. Reed, 12–20.

prise. Given his insistence on privacy, his very ambivalent attitude to public opinion in Oxford and elsewhere, and his aversion to all political measures smacking of collectivism, his preoccupation with public or group consciousness makes one wonder. Did he in the world of his fiction adhere to an idea of community (as Cleanth Brooks and others have suggested[3]) that in his life he rather turned his back upon? Or are we to understand his use of groups primarily as a rhetorical device, as one particular narrative technique among others? Joseph Reed has studied Faulkner's groups chiefly from this latter angle.[4] Neither view has gone unchallenged, and Brooks in particular has received some heavy flak from Thomas McHaney. But others have rallied to his defense, most notably perhaps Wolf Kindermann.[5]

A special problem, and one which has received relatively little attention, is posed by Faulkner's large–scale use of groups in *A Fable*. Can these be seen in the same context as, say, the town in *Light in August* or *Absalom, Absalom!*? And in which respect, to raise yet another question, does his apparent interest in collective consciousness link Faulkner with other collectivist novelists of the Thirties and Forties, such as James T. Farrell and John Dos Passos?

The last question points to a number of aspects of collective behavior Faulkner is clearly not concerned with. He is not seriously interested in the group (a community or any other group) as a body held together by common economic, political, or social interests. As we shall see, some of his groups are held together by their religious beliefs, while others are linked by particular experiences they share. Faulkner's primary interest, however, is in what I would like to call the "forensic" aspect of communal appearances.

The term strikes me as appropriate for two reasons. In its original meaning it refers, of course, to public debate and discussion, and I would argue that it is in this role most of all that we encounter Faulkner's communities: as public audiences. Whether they sit on Will Varner's porch in Frenchman's Bend, mill around the square in Jefferson, or throng the streets of Chaulnesmont in *A Fable*, Faulkner's groups are portrayed primarily as observers who then debate among themselves on what they have

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[3] Brooks's views on Faulkner's sense of community have been most influential. In addition to the works cited above, see, for instance, Michael Millgate, "William Faulkner: The Problem of Point of View," *William Faulkner: Four Decades of Criticism*, 179–91, esp. 190. I have not been able to consult Carol A.R. Rigsby's dissertation, "The Vanishing Community: Studies in Some Late Novels by William Faulkner" (Toronto, 1973), nor that of Sonia Grace Gernes, "The Relationship of Story Teller to Community in the Tales of the Southwest Humorists, Mark Twain, and William Faulkner" (Washington, 1975).

[4] See Reed, *passim*, and Ruppersburg, *passim*.

[5] See Thomas L. McHaney, "Brooks on Faulkner: The End of the Long View," *Review* (Blacksburg, Va.), 1979, 29–45; Kindermann, *passim*.

observed. Often their debate is founded on nothing but rumor and gossip: what they talk about, then, is public gossip, or gossip made public.

Secondly, we can apply the term "forensic" to the behavior of Faulkner's groups and crowds because the events they watch and comment on are nearly always connected with a breach of law — with murder, rape, arson, theft, bootlegging, a mutiny, or with litigations of various sorts, court cases, or legal disputes. Sometimes these cases involve no more than a flaunting of public morals, as when Manfred de Spain and Eula Snopes refuse to abide by conventional marital standards. Another frequent motif publicly discussed is that of "the stranger coming to town," as in the case of Sutpen, Flem Snopes, or Joe Christmas. Even with this motif, however, we can normally see the two sides of Faulkner's forensic interest at work, as when, for instance, Sutpen is triumphantly and publicly arraigned in *Absalom, Absalom!*, or Flem Snopes, the newly appointed town clerk, is watched by the community of Jefferson as he is trying to steal the brass fittings in "Centaur in Brass". The basic constellation rarely changes — the women who talk about Ruby Lamar and Goodwin in *Sanctuary*, their "collective breath hissing in the musty silence of the courtroom,"[6] are very much like their French counterparts who turn against Marthe, Marya and the girl in *A Fable*. Nor is the crowd in the small town in Missouri surrounding the turnkey who has arrested the horsethief in *A Fable* any different from that surging around Joe Christmas in the squares of Jefferson and Mottstown in *Light in August*.

A list of the behavioral patterns most typical of these crowds would include these: they are mostly passive observers, watching with "gaping mouths" or "toothed orifices," in "shocked amazement" or with "amazed speculation," and they tend to remain inactive even in cases of gross injustice, as they do in *The Hamlet*, for instance. They are easily duped and as easily outraged; self-righteous and voyeuristic, they nearly always miss the point. Their "collective eye" is not only not very perceptive, but often blind, the irony being that knowledge — today we would perhaps speak of information rather than knowledge — is all they are after. Faulkner rarely gives them a chance to do serious damage ("Dry September" is an exception); usually they are simply there, "moiling" like the dogs in "The Bear," and, like these, often making "a strange, sibilant sound." They are fickle, cowardly, and easily swayed, and perhaps it is worth noting that few of Faulkner's major characters, male or female, good or bad, pay any respect or even serious attention to these watching groups. If they indeed represent what Faulkner thought of the community, the conclusion can only be that that certainly was not very much.

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[6] William Faulkner, *Sanctuary: The Original Text*, ed. Noel Polk (New York: Random House, 1981), 276.

But do they? The answer is difficult, because they do and they don't. Clearly, they are part of the community, but so are Horace Benbow, General Compson, V.K. Ratliff, Chick Mallison, Gavin Stevens, Linda Kohl Snopes, to name a few characters to whom Faulkner does accord a sense of communal responsibility. These are perhaps clearer indicators of what he felt about the positive potential of a community than are the crowds he portrays; how much they mattered to him and at what point in his life and career he began to take an interest in them, however, is an open question.[7] In its emphasis on the individual and his problems and in its almost complete disregard of communal politics, Faulkner's Jefferson is definitely closer to Anderson's Winesburg than to Lewis' Gopher Prairie.

I will try to substantiate these general remarks by a closer look at *Light in August*. Most of the occasions on which the town's presence, or that of groups within the town, is alluded to are of the kind already mentioned. In Chapter 2 Joe Christmas, a stranger in the town of Jefferson, is observed and talked about by the workmen at the sawmill, a group, it seems, which is introduced primarily for the purpose of providing a public frame for Christmas' appearance in Jefferson. We hear next to nothing about the working conditions at the mill, its function as a social or economic factor in Jefferson, or about the background of the individual workers; what Faulkner tells us is that they "watched him go down to the sawdust pile," "they watched him for the rest of that Friday," "they were all conscious of him," "they said among themselves ..." (*LA*, 29). The pattern is repeated when Lucas Burch turns up, and presently the motif of "the stranger in town" is combined with that of a breach of law — "the town is just waiting for him to get caught" as he is peddling whiskey around the square (*LA*, 41).

Joanna Burden is another foreigner, a "Yankee, a lover of negroes... in the town and out of it" (*LA*, 42), and so is, of course, Lena Grove, so is, or has remained for many years, Rev. Hightower. Both of them attract the attention of the town for similar reasons, as they violate its moral standards and, each in their own way, cause moral outrage. An exception to the rule are Doc Hines and his wife who, at least as far as the people of Mottstown know, have not committed any crime or broken any moral conventions. In their case, communal comment is accorded to a seemingly normal, if somewhat outlandish couple, "lonely, gray in color, a little

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[7] See McHaney's remarks in "Brooks on Faulkner": "Women and children in Faulkner's works transcend the mores and moral values of community: they accept illegitimacy, prostitution, racial ambiguity, poverty, hard luck, and many other things that are harshly judged by the community, perhaps simply because in our culture they are set outside the social order. Such characters give us perspective upon community as Faulkner employs it ..." (41). Compare on the other hand the views put forward by Kindermann, who tries to trace a "development" in Faulkner's attitude toward the community.

smaller than most other men and women, as if they belonged to a different race, species" (*LA*, 322). Ironically, the public references to "Uncle Doc" are mostly rather good–natured and humorous, condoning his racial fanaticism as the idiosyncrasy of a harmless old man.

Apart from the scandal caused by Rev. Hightower's refusal to resign from his pulpit upon his wife's suicide, the two instances in *Light in August* in which Faulkner describes the town's presence in some detail are criminal affairs: the murder of Joanna Burden and the events surrounding the capture and murder of Joe Christmas. In both cases, the groups alluded to are once again engaged mainly in watching the events and talking about them. As others have noted, the crowd staring at Joanna Burden's body and at the fire is more clearly differentiated than most; Faulkner scathingly mentions the merchants, the lawyers and doctors, the women "with secret frustrated breasts" who look at the fire with "dull and static amaze" (*LA*, 273), celebrating an "emotional barbecue, a Roman holiday," an image he also uses to denounce the mob attending Sutpen's wedding in *Absalom, Absalom!* (*AA*, 57).[8] His contempt for the crowd is obvious. Not only does their behavior lack all grace and decorum, but it is hysterical, irresponsible and childish:

> They were gathering now about the sheriff and the deputy and the negro, with avid eyes upon which the sheer prolongation of empty flames had begun to pall, with faces identical one with another. It was as if all their individual five senses had become one organ of looking, like an apotheosis, the words that flew among them wind– or air-engendered *Is that him? Is that the one that did it? Sheriff's got him. Sheriff has already caught him* The sheriff looked at them. "Go away," he said. "All of you. Go look at the fire. If I need any help, I can send for you. Go on away." (*LA*, 275)

Similarly, the crowd in Jefferson surrounding Percy Grimm and his men is described as naive, "with faces rapt and empty and immobile as the faces of cows" (*LA*, 433). While Grimm has an objective, they do not, and they blindly trust him, "as though somehow his vision and patriotism and pride in the town ... had been quicker and truer than theirs" (*LA*, 432).

Frequently, public resonance of an event or a series of events manifests itself in what Faulkner simply refers to as "the talk," anonymous reports and conversations among the townspeople and countrymen, "dying and borning again like a wind or a fire" (*LA*, 330) and occasionally leading to extended passages of collective narration, as in the case of the capture of Christmas in Mottstown (*LA*, 331ff.), the report about Hightower's "disgrace" to Byron Bunch (*LA*, 54f.), or more briefly, the speculations

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[8] The crowd at the fire is commented upon by Reed, 136f., Ruppersburg, 53, Michael Millgate, *The Achievement of William Faulkner*, 2nd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 128f.

as to why Christmas sought refuge in Hightower's house (*LA*, 421). Perhaps it is significant that only Byron Bunch seems to fear this kind of talk; he imagines "the air full of it" and tries to protect Lena Grove against the "voices, the hushed tense voices about the town, about the square through which he had hurried her, where men met among the safe and familiar lights, telling it" (*LA*, 78).

Given Faulkner's frequent references to communal observation and speculation, it is surprising how little the town of Jefferson actually knows about the people living in their midst. As late as six months after his arrival, "[n]o one knew where [Christmas] lived, slept at night" (*LA*, 31), and the sheriff apparently does not know of Christmas' whereabouts even after he has worked in Jefferson for three years. Nor is the town aware of the fact that Byron Bunch visits Hightower regularly, "since they meet and talk only at night" (*LA*, 43). No wonder, then, that the people of Jefferson do not even come near the truth about Christmas and Joanna Burden.

Public knowledge, however, is not only limited, but often biased and prejudiced. While listening to the public slander about Hightower Byron Bunch thinks that "in a small town, where evil is harder to accomplish, where opportunities for privacy are scarcer, ... people can invent more of it in other people's names. Because that was all it required: that idea, that single word blown from mind to mind" (*LA*, 65–66). Allusions to the town's fickleness and unpredictability abound, and even the anonymous speaker recounting Christmas's arrest in Mottstown mentions the waywardness of public opinion:

> "Folks are funny. They cant stick to one way of thinking or doing anything unless they get a new reason for doing it ever so often. And then when they do get a new reason, they are liable to change anyhow." (*LA*, 336–37)

Mottstown's "blinding its collective eye" (*LA*, 323) to the charity shown the Hineses by Negro women, the sudden acceptance of Percy Grimm's authority by the townspeople of Jefferson, their changing behavior towards Hightower are examples of such an attitude.

Probably the most interesting — and most intricate — sequence portraying public opinion in *Light in August* is that in which Byron Bunch is informed by "the town" about Hightower's past. The narrative here is a kind of collective indirect speech indicating what "the town said,", "the town believed," "the town thought," "the town realised." The range of responses Faulkner mentions is wider than in most cases and extends from moral outrage to a complex kind of compassion and, finally, acceptance.

> Then the town was sorry with being glad, as people sometimes are sorry for those whom they have at last forced to do as they wanted them to. (*LA*, 64)

> Then all of a sudden the whole thing seemed to blow away, like an evil wind. It was as though the town realised that he would be a part of their life until he died, and that they might as well become reconciled. (*LA*, 67)

The town here is more than the usual witness; although as a whole the community remains largely passive, there are groups within it which do take action: the church elders, "the old men and women," the "masked men" of the Ku Klux Klan. In addition, there are groups like "the loafers," "the young people talking behind his back" (*LA*, 58), members of the other churches, the reporters from Memphis, and even the "little boys who did not know exactly what it was but that it was something, stopping and looking with still round eyes at the man standing quite motionless before the locked door" of his church (*LA*, 64). Nonetheless, the real drama is Hightower's very private and personal dilemma; his conflict is not one with the community of Jefferson or even his congregation, but with himself, and the most we can say perhaps is that because he is a minister, his congregation is drawn into his struggle with himself, with the larger community watching as this struggle unfolds. Interestingly enough, the point which touches off the public scandal in the first place once again involves a case of adultery and, subsequently, suicide.

The groups considered so far have all been public audiences which, technically speaking, serve various functions either as narrative reflectors or as actual narrators. Occasionally, however, Faulkner goes beyond his normal use of the group–as–witness device and demonstrates an interest in the group as such, in group processes and group consciousness transcending that of simple communal knowledge or group awareness. One such case is that of Percy Grimm's platoon of men who are described in the process of becoming a group, "intact," as Faulkner says, "after ... the suttee of volition's surrender," and ready even to die for Grimm if he should so demand:

> Most of them were of an age, a generation, an experience. But it was more than that. They now had a profound and bleak gravity as they stood where crowds milled, grave, austere, detached, looking with blank, bleak eyes at the slow throngs ... (*LA*, 423–33)

They act as a true collective, understanding each other without the necessity of speech, and responding *en masse*, a phrase which Faulkner will employ for such behavior in *A Fable*.[9] Their presence is menacing; Faulkner

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[9] The lawyer is thinking that "neither in lust nor appetite nor greed lay wombed the potency of [man's] threat, but in silence and meditation: his ability to move *en masse* at his own impulse, and silence in which to fall into thought and then action as into an open manhole; with exultation too, since none knew this better than the lords proprietors of his massed breathing, the hero–giant precentors of his seething moil, who used his spendthrift potency in the very act of curbing and directing it, and ever had and ever would ..." (*FAB*, 187).

surrounds them with an aura of terror and the brutality of storm-troopers. Yet the sinister quality he ascribes to Grimm's men is balanced by Hightower's vision of the almost genial, certainly polite sense of fellowship binding his former congregation together:

> *Now they are gathering, approaching along streets slowly and turning in, greeting one another: the groups, the couples, the single ones. There is a little informal talking in the church itself, lowtoned, the ladies constant and a little sibilant with fans, nodding to arriving friends as they pass in the aisle.* (*LA*, 346)

Clearly there are connections and resemblances between groups like these and those serving as public witnesses, but it may be helpful to distinguish between the two. In the latter, what I have called Faulkner's forensic interest seems to predominate, whereas with groups like Percy Grimm's platoon or Hightower's congregation the emphasis is on the collective experience portrayed. The difference may be a subtle one, but it indicates the directions Faulkner's interest in group appearances took.

Returning to the questions raised initially and still limiting myself to *Light in August*, I would have to disagree with those who, like Cleanth Brooks, tend to view Faulkner's crowds as representing a kind of model Southern community which, if the individual could only overcome his loneliness and alienation, could provide harmony, security, and even a sense of purpose and moral direction. Insofar as he uses groups as narrative reflectors or as vehicles for an anonymous collective voice, we can certainly understand them, with Joseph Reed, as belonging to his "carpenter's tools," as devices he employs in order to achieve the impersonal and dramatic form of narration he liked to experiment with. But I believe that their function goes beyond this. For the communal backdrop that the crowds furnish in *Light in August* also serves to throw into even sharper relief the anguish of the individual they so often fail to grasp. Because the reader learns how deeply the town of Jefferson misunderstands him, Joe Christmas gains in stature, and the terrible predicament of his existence is driven home all the more sharply. With certain reservations, the same may be said of Hightower, while the fact that the community of Mottstown accepts Doc Hines as a harmless old man can only increase the terror he inspires. And yet, however limited their understanding may be, Faulkner's crowds also remind us that even the most intensely private experience takes place within a wider public context. The town of Jefferson may condone an action or pass moral judgment, voice its outrage or simply "slough that which conscience refuses to assimilate" (*LA*, 323), but it is always there, establishing a public background for the private sorrows the novel portrays. Communal presence in *Light in August* should therefore perhaps be understood within the larger framework of "the private vs. the public" rather than in terms of the conflict between the individual

and the community. Finally, *Light in August* also shows Faulkner's interest in group processes as such, in man's "ability to move *en masse*." Of the examples of group behavior I have quoted, only these suggest a certain link between *Light in August* and other collectivist novels of the Thirties.[10]

Light in August is in many respects typical of the ways in which Faulkner deals with group representation both in his short stories and in other novels. A comprehensive and chronological study of his use of groups and group behavior would no doubt yield rich results, even if at the end we might still wonder why he chose to subject certain events to public scrutiny — Manfred de Spain's and Eula's love affair, for instance — while he lets others, like Labove's thwarted love for the same woman, go by unnoticed. *A Fable* alone would warrant a closer look at both the many forensic scenes it contains and Faulkner's probing into the collective mind of the various groups involved in the plot, the regiment, the people of Chaulnesmont, the disciples of the corporal, the military establishment. In order to understand Faulkner's interest in public awareness and public debate, we will have to consider his fascination with courtroom scenes and legal affairs, his frequent references to public oratory of the kind practised by V.K. Ratliff as possibly being part of the same complex. All of these can perhaps be regarded as very Southern qualities. That the forensic quality of Faulkner's imagination, moreover, is also reflected in other areas of his work becomes apparent when we think of an episode like Flem Snopes' erection of the monument on his wife's grave in *The Town*. Publicly praising Eula for what in private she never practised, as the public of Jefferson and Frenchman's Bend very well know, it is a fine example of the ironies Faulkner could achieve as he contemplated the private and the public side of certain of the situations and constellations he wrote about.

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[10] As far as I am aware, these links have not been studied extensively. In a recent book on the "collectivist" novel of the Thirties by Christian Mair, *Geschichtsverständnis und Textstruktur im sozialkritischen amerikanischen Roman der dreißiger Jahre: John Dos Passos, James T. Farrell, Josephine Herbst. Eine literaturwissenschaftlich-linguistische Studie* (Heidelberg, 1985), Faulkner is not mentioned.

Judith Bryant Wittenberg (Boston)

Gender and Linguistic Strategies in *Absalom, Absalom!*

To attempt to explore the intersection of language and gender in Faulkner's most intricately woven novel is a perilous task; indeed, to join the theoretical problematics of the language–gender relation to the knottiness of this particular text might threaten to produce a Gordian creation. Nevertheless, *Absalom, Absalom!* seems almost to invite such an exploration. In the first place, the novel is at one level about the paradox of language itself; its rigid symbolic structures exist "prior to the moment at which each subject at a certain point in his mental development makes his entry into it,"[1] thus formalizing and mediating all subsequent experiences, and serving to constrict the individual speaker; yet at the same time the immense variety of language leaves open the creative possibilities of personal enunciation, the subject's "struggle to renew the never–exhausted power of symbols in the human exchange."[2] This paradox is enacted in Thomas Sutpen's "fall" into division and difference as a youth, a fall which is reified in the sociolinguistic categories of rich and poor, black and white, male and female, but which also generates the subsequent narrative and its dazzling display of the multiplicity and elasticity of language.

Obviously, sexual identity is one of the things learned during the acquisition of language, as the individual is caught "in the chain of words which binds it to one gender or another" and assumes a position as son or daughter within the family.[3] The gender aspects of language and behavior are central to *Absalom, Absalom!*, and the novel manages simultaneously to encode and critique the prevailing masculinist discourse and culture; this paradoxical double operation is amplified by the fact that one of Faulkner's thematically most patriarchal texts is introduced by one of his most memorable female narrators. Faulkner spoke of the novel as "the story of a man who wanted a son and got too many" (*FU*, 71), and critics have explored its preoccupation with the issues of paternity, filiality, and

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1 Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits* (New York: Norton, 1977), 148.

2 Lacan, 71.

3 Elizabeth Wright, *Psychoanalytic Criticism: Theory in Practice* (New York: Methuen, 1984), 110.

fraternity.[4] Yet the author chose a distinctive and to some degree markedly feminine voice to present the first of the multiple narrative depictions of Thomas Sutpen.

Elsewhere I have discussed the fact that many of Faulkner's female characters suffer from "aphonia," or voicelessness, having little to say about their intellectual perceptions of or emotional responses to the circumstances in which they are enmeshed. Some others, though en–voiced, are nevertheless mediated and constrained by the more powerful masculine discourse that surrounds and implicitly or explicitly defines them. Still others, although more or less accessible as speaking subjects, are perceived to have — or themselves acknowledge — a philosophical opposition to words that in some sense undermines their rhetorical self–assertiveness.[5]

Such characters' silence, distance, and uncertainty about language can thus be seen as compromising our access to female subjectivity in the majority of Faulkner's texts; none of these characteristics, however, identifies Rosa Coldfield, whose vivid speech is as formidable and often as lacerating as the whip she seizes from Wash Jones in an emblematic moment. Although Rosa's language at one level reveals how fully she has been inscribed into phallogocentric structures, it also serves her not only as an instrument of creation but as a weapon of rebellion against an oppressive male figure who metaphorically represents the whole of the larger context that has tragically constricted her individual possibilities.

To be sure, Rosa is but one element in a text that reveals the way in which women's speech is fully repressed or partially restricted by the discourse of patriarchy. All the women of the novel are in some sense mediated by the presence of the collective male sensibility represented by the men of Jefferson, the "they" who watch and discuss Sutpen and his family, and by the recurrent and highly confident generalizations about gender differences and about the female sex provided by Mr. Compson. The latter character seems representative of all speakers who internalize and then rhetorically reflect conventional perceptions when he notes that "it was the women who first suspected what [Sutpen] wanted," while "none of the men" did (*AA*, 39), mentions "the father who is the natural enemy of any son and son–in–law of whom the mother is the ally" (*AA*, 104), or repeatedly makes assertions such as "[women] lead beautiful lives ... not only divorced from, but irrevocably excommunicated from all reality"

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[4] See André Bleikasten, "Fathers in Faulkner," *The Fictional Father: Lacanian Readings of the Text*, ed. Robert Con Davis (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981), 115–46; Peter Brooks, "Incredulous Narration: *Absalom, Absalom!*," in his *Reading for the Plot* (New York: Random House, 1985), 286–312.

[5] Judith B. Wittenberg, "William Faulkner: A Feminist Consideration," *American Novelists Revisited: Essays in Feminist Criticism*, ed. Fritz Fleischmann (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1982), 325–38.

(*AA*, 191) and "women are even less complex than that and to them any wedding is better than no wedding" (*AA*, 52). However ironic it may be, language like this, perfused with notions about gender–based categories, tacitly reveals the difficulty of perceiving the singularity of an individual, particularly one who is a woman. Mr. Compson's perorations, nonetheless, do offer assessments of the rhetorical essence of the female plight: "we in the South made our women into ladies. Then the War came and made the ladies into ghosts" (*AA*, 12); "the other sex is separated into three sharp divisions, separated (two of them) by a chasm which could be crossed but one time and in but one direction — ladies, women, females" (*AA*, 109).

One pivotal but little–discussed female figure who is affected mightily by the language of the text in which she is embedded and whose situation proleptically mirrors the more compelling ambiguities of that of Miss Rosa is Ellen Coldfield. Crucial not only for the multiple nature of her symbolic role — Ellen is inscribed into two oppressively patrocentric family structures, the daughter of a complex and difficult man and the wife of the obsessive and overbearing Sutpen as well as the mother of two of his children — she also represents that all-important maternal subjectivity which has been repressed by psychoanalytic theory and by most fictional texts, especially those by males. To be sure, Ellen is like her husband in being represented only in and through the speech of others, but she is unlike him in offering no more than a few lines of direct discourse so that as an individual she remains perpetually shadowy, elusive. Mr. Compson, not suprisingly, describes her and her speech with the sort of reductive phrases guaranteed to deny her not only dignity but human specificity. Calling her with litanic and pejorative frequency "a butterfly" (*AA*, 69, 74, 78, 80, 85, 97, 126), he first invokes her presence at her wedding rehearsal "in a state very near hysteria" (*AA*, 54). Because he sees Ellen as an hysterical insect, it is appropriate that Mr. Compson describes her language in one moment as "nonsense," little more than a series of "bright set meaningless phrases" (*AA*, 69), and, in another — her description of Judith's planned bridal — as "a fairy tale written for and acted by a fashionable ladies' club" (*AA*, 76). Hardly compatible with this denigrating characterization but equally negative is his later depiction of her as "engineering" in a manipulative way the courtship of Judith and Charles (*AA*, 103).

While such repressive representation of an enigmatic female is to be expected from the patriarchal Mr. Compson, one would anticipate less of it from the sister for whom Ellen is a worrisome and pathetically premonitory figure. Yet Rosa, too, though conceding Ellen greater specificity and narrating some brief passages in which she speaks directly, prefaces her

presentation with some dismissive and proto-masculine commentary, calling her sister repeatedly a "blind romantic fool" who became a "blind woman mother fool" and describing her as "a virtuous woman" who serves as "a shield" for the ambitious Sutpen (*AA*, 15). Although Rosa's critical phrases are obviously defensive in nature, reactive to her own later problematic responses to her sister's husband, they echo judgments made in the prevailing male discourse. Later, however, she recounts Ellen's poignant comment to her father about her children: "Think? What else do I do? What else do I lie awake at night and do but think of them?" (*AA*, 27). It is a brief but compelling moment, offering temporary direct access to Ellen's sense of the terrible emotional difficulties in which she has embroiled herself by heeding the social charge that she must make the transition from "daughter" to "wife and mother" or forever become the dreaded "spinster."

But Ellen's piercing statement is heard through a door by her younger sister, a door that could, by a stretch of the imagination, be seen as representing the barrier not only between the two women or between them and personal fulfillment but also between any speaking subject and the reality that language attempts to capture but that remains eternally deferred by the limited structures available to express it. Moreover, Ellen's brief rhetorical self–assertion ends tellingly in a single word, "Papa," which, however reproachful in its intent, seems somehow to acknowledge her submissive stance before the male–dominated linguistic and social systems that restrict her. When she speaks again a few pages later, she is in the process of removing her children from the barn where they are watching their father wrestle with the wild negroes, and, although Henry is screaming and vomiting, her speech is utterly that of a "lady," restrained and sweetly polite. "I know you will excuse us, gentlemen ... I will make myself try to understand it ... Judith honey! Time to come to bed" (*AA*, 30). Certainly the context makes such rhetorical mildness so inappropriate as to seem wildly ridiculous, but Ellen's speech reveals how thoroughly she has internalized conventional notions of ladylike language. Fittingly, she says virtually nothing else during the course of the novel.

Rosa is linguistically far more liberated, and her obsessive and emotional rhetoric is a triumphantly subversive presence in the novel, counteracting and tacitly undermining the measured, rational, and data–filled cadences of Mr. Compson. Nevertheless, more than just Rosa's dismissive comments about her sister reveal to what degree she is caught in the genderized prisonhouse of language as much as the male speakers. The speech used by and about her mirrors the larger problematics of her situation.

In the very first sentence of the novel she is designated as "Miss Coldfield," revealing her consignment to a socially marginal status because of

her failure to marry. Though this position on the fringes allows her the freedom to criticize those more centrally bound up in the system — a freedom of which she avails herself, but on rather different terms from what one might expect, for her outrage is highly personal, showing little awareness of the larger issues involved — it also virtually guarantees certain responses in those who observe her. She is initially described, for example, in ways that arbitrarily link the way she smells or appears to assumptions about the pathos of her spinsterly condition; she evinces "the rank smell of female old flesh long embattled in virginity" and "resemble[s] a crucified child" (*AA*, 8); her social situation appears to be textualized in her body, which is rigid and stunted, and in her house, which has "a quality of grim endurance ... like her" (*AA*, 10). Throughout the novel, she is regarded by the other narrators, all male, as an alien being, an "old dame" trapped in a demonology created in part by her unmarried and presumably frustrated state. Such judgments, it should be pointed out, are often echoed by critics, who refer to her as "old maid Rosa" and confidently discuss her "incontestable virginity,"[6] see her as "damned" by her "horror and hate,"[7] and call her a "case history" whose discourse is "impenetrable," verging on hysteria.[8]

Certainly, Rosa's voice, even heard directly, though most palpably "haunted" by the omnipresent ghost of Thomas Sutpen (*AA*, 8), reveals how thoroughly it is dominated by the discourse of others. That sentence which introduces her as Miss Coldfield also places her in a room she "called the office because her father had called it that," a room with the blinds closed "because when she was a girl someone had believed that light and moving air carried heat and that dark was always cooler" (*AA*, 7). The first passages in which she herself speaks are filled with conventional social and religious language; she speaks about "Southern gentlemen and gentlewomen," about "respectability," about the categories "nigger and white," and about Quentin's wife someday wanting "a new gown or a new chair for the house" (*AA*, 9, 15, 30, 10) and also about "salvation," "souls," and "redemption" (*AA*, 23), though the latter is clearly at odds with her invocation of Sutpen as an ogre or djinni. Miss Rosa is also quick to give individuals their familial designations — "father," "sister," "nephew and niece" — and seems fond of categories of all sorts — "a widow without ever having been a bride," "murderer," "fratricide." She often

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6 John T. Matthews, *The Play of Faulkner's Language* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 132, 125.

7 Cleanth Brooks, *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), 305.

8 Philip M. Weinstein, "Meditations on the Other: Faulkner's Rendering of Women," *Faulkner and Women*, ed. Doreen Fowler and Ann J. Abadie (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1986), 81–99, see 91–2.

speaks in the language of economics ("price," "notes of hand", "fall due") or of the law ("brief," "plead"). Even her syntax is marked by binary constructions — "respectability ... opposite of respectability" (*AA*, 17), the disparity "between a man like that and papa," "men with valor and strength but without pity or honor" (*AA*, 20). All of these tendencies suggest how thorough has been her indoctrination into the linguistic structures of the patriarchal system, for they are tendencies equally evident in the rhetoric of Mr. Compson, which is eventually perpetuated in the joint narration of Quentin and Shreve.

Binarism, categories of all sorts, and the codes of family, class, religion, and law — these all represent the procrustean operations of language upon the speaking subject and the engendering of division. If, however, the depiction of Rosa Coldfield shows the way in which any person may become conceptually entrapped, his or her options predetermined by the linguistic system and its apposition of sexual difference, it also reveals how that same speaker can use language in radical and deconstructive ways, struggling to renew, as Lacan said, its never–exhausted power. Early in *Absalom, Absalom!*, one sees the metonymic slippage of significant words or phrases from one figure to another: "ghost" is applied variously to Rosa, Sutpen, Quentin and the people of Yoknapatawpha, "grim haggard" is used on successive pages to characterize both Rosa and the French architect, and "cold" describes Rosa, Sutpen, and Clytie. This linguistic cross–dressing, as it were, serves to undermine the assignment of gender positions and to subvert the assumption of unitary meaning. It is, moreover, echoed by appearance and behavior that transgresses gender boundaries, as in the case of Charles Bon's "feminine" garments, Judith's plowing, and Rosa's failure, in at least one instance, to do "what a Southern lady ... would have been expected to do" (*AA*, 86).

In a passage that is particularly heightened, Rosa describes "*that sickness somewhere at the prime foundation of this factual scheme from which the prisoner soul, miasmal–distillant, wroils ever upward sunward*" (*AA*, 143), and it is clear throughout the novel that she is at least rhetorically, if not actually, determined to escape from some of the constrictions of what–is. Critics have often commented on the powerfully constitutive force of her language, its capacity to make Sutpen appear to Quentin, "as though by outrage recapitulation evoked, quiet inattentive and harmless, out of the biding and dreamy and victorious dust," or to "abrupt," the product of Rosa's hyperbole, "out of quiet thunderclap" (*AA*, 8). While the excesses of her description, obsessive and couched in extreme diction, like the circularity of her exposition, drive Quentin to attempt to recast her version in a more tempered and chronological form and to invoke his father's rational–factual narration, Rosa's refusal of ei-

ther moderation or linearity can be seen as a form of rebellion against the usual unfolding of patriarchal narrative, which is, in its traditional form, Peter Brooks tells us, "a matter of patronymics," as "only the sons can tell the story of the fathers."[9] Moreover, Rosa's use of compound words, her roiling rhetoric, and her occasional moments of incomprehensibility, like her expository method, are, however inadvertent, nevertheless subversive, seeming part of a strategy to disorient her narratee even as she engulfs him. Rosa appears, as Luce Irigaray says in her discussion of female style, "to work at 'destroying' the discursive mechanism ... to put the torch to ... well–constructed forms."[10]

Rosa's narration in Chapter 5, marking both the center of the novel and the apogee of its rhetorical force, is also essentially the last time that she speaks substantively, as though the excesses of her speech in that passage necessarily lead to its termination. Moreover, the section reveals both the way in which she is entrapped in deleterious conceptual structures and the manner in which she is struggling desperately to undermine them through her radical speech patterns; it is, very much and strangely, a "cocoon–casket." In the moment that she visits the Sutpen place and confronts the half–black woman who might have been her stepdaughter, Rosa betrays her inability to "*cry through something*," which she defines as the "antagonism" that she senses behind Clytie's "*coffee–colored face*" but which proves instead to be her failure to see herself and the other woman as more than "*two abstract contradictions*" (*AA*, 137–8). When Clytie calls her "Rosa," omitting the respectful "Miss" required by the color bar, and puts her hand on Rosa's arm, although Rosa later comes to recognize the imminent fall of "*the eggshell shibboleth of caste and color*," at the moment she reveals how deeply she is enmeshed in such thinking, saying brutally, "*Take your hand off me, nigger*!" (*AA*, 139–40). The two women, potentially allied by their marginal status, their kinship ties, and their common experiences during the war, instead discover, as Rosa acknowledges subsequently, that they have been "*speaking no language which the other understood*" (*AA*, 153) because they are separated by the racial strictures embodied in the terrible epithet "nigger."

From the moment that Rosa reasserts the linguistic barrier that divides her from the woman who is to some degree her black counterpart, as if in some sort of tacit apologia her speech becomes highly varied, polyphonic, evincing the presence of an array of disruptive heteroglossia and thus of the pluralism that seems to evade her attitudinally. She offers poetically impassioned rhetoric interspersed with more or less straightforward (if

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[9] Peter Brooks, 301.

[10] *The Sex Which Is Not One* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 76, 79.

that is a term one can ever use in reference to Rosa's method) narrative passages describing aspects of the romance of Judith and Bon and the death of the latter. She also provides examples of sophisticated oxymoron (Bon "*was absent, and he was; he returned and he was not*" [*AA*, 153], the idea that her "*presence*" is to Sutpen a form of "*absence*" [*AA*, 166], "*dynamic rigidity*" [*AA*, 159]) and uses the word "*paradox*" to describe Clytie as well as Sutpen's marriage proposal, thus demonstrating a speech invigorated by contradiction, if outside "normal" sense; some would say that, in this respect, her method is quintessential Faulkner.

In some moments, to be sure, she returns to the conventional codes often evident in the first chapter, denouncing herself in legalese ("*I hold no brief for myself*" [*AA*, 158]), offering psychosociological self–exoneration for her initial acceptance of Sutpen's proposal ("*in this time and place where most of the young men were dead and all the living ones either old or already married or tired, too tired for love; he my best, my only chance in this*" [*AA*, 169]), or affirming the eternal verities ("*love and faith at least above the murdering and the folly*" [*AA*, 150]). Yet she goes on to refer to other of those "*verities*" as "*miragy antics*" and brackets the lucid analysis of her capitulation to Sutpen with the simple non–sense of nursery rhyme ("*Rosie Coldfield, lose him, weep him; caught a man but couldn't keep him*" [*AA*, 168, 170]). By the end of the passage she is referring to herself alternately in the third and first person, and her final comments combine a hyperbolic and satanic vision of Sutpen as "*the light–blinded bat–like image of his own torment cast by the fierce demoniac lantern up from beneath the earth's crust*" (*AA*, 171) with a rather clear description of the deaths of Wash Jones' daughter and Sutpen. Her outpouring may be in one sense "hysterical," as at least one critic has suggested,[11] but it is also radical, thrilling, kaleidoscopic, deconstructing the "normal" processes of narrative and interpretation.

One reader of the novel asked Faulkner whether he felt at this moment that Rosa's monologue was "running away" with him and if that were why he brought in Shreve (*FU*, 75), whose harshly reductive commentary serves in one sense to defuse Rosa's rapturous outpourings. And Rosa herself, heard again only in the final chapter, is trembling and producing merely a "steady whimpering, almost a moaning, sound" (*AA*, 366); when she does speak, it is simply to issue a rude command to Jim Bond and to call him"nigger." Her vocal disempowerment seems to portend and is followed by her actual death.

Despite her own near–silence, however, Rosa has left a rhetorical legacy to her narratee, Quentin Compson, and late in the novel he reveals just

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[11] Weinstein, 92.

how profoundly he has been carrying on the dialogic struggle between rigorous patriarchal discourse and emotive, disruptive female *parole*. Throughout the novel he periodically undergoes an inner dialogue between "the two separate Quentins" mentioned at the outset, and he eventually becomes aware of the way Sutpen "fell" as a boy into sociolinguistic division; he is also alert to the contradictory functions of language itself, on the one hand its pernicious ability to reify social categories, on the other its capacity to be the "thread ... by which the little surface corners and edges of men's secret and solitary lives may be joined for an instant now and then" (*AA*, 251). At the same time, however, at a far less conscious level Quentin seems to vacillate between two modes of speech. One moment he sounds like his father or like Miss Rosa in her periods of perpetuating patriarchal ideas, as when he passes on the male interpretations of Sutpen's "design" to his Harvard roommate or acquiesces to Shreve's comparison of Bon's mother to an "old Sabine" and of Judith to the "sherbet" Bon settles for instead of whiskey or champagne (*AA*, 303, 323). He even illuminates Sutpen's brutal dismissal of Milly Jones' baby in the revealing phrases, "It wasn't a son. It was a girl" (*AA*, 292); though Quentin is far from espousing such attitudes, he vividly understands how fully they "explain" male dynastic behavior. At other moments, however, Quentin sounds like Rosa in her more impassioned and disorderly moments, using compound words, speaking of the "*dragon's outcropping of Sutpen blood the son might sow*" (*AA*, 182), and narrating almost compulsively.

By the end of the novel, Quentin is racked with emotional and rhetorical contradictions. Shaking violently and uncontrollably, he insists, "I feel fine" (*AA*, 361); responding to Shreve's question about whether he understands, he answers "I dont know. Yes, of course I understand. I dont know" (*AA*, 362). He also recalls the palindromic interchange with Henry Sutpen that seems to denote a reversible plot and to foreclose the possibility of meaning.[12] Finally, Quentin reacts to Shreve's reductive comment that "it takes two niggers to get rid of one Sutpen" and his pointless question as to why he hates the South with an outburst marked by emotion and negation, "I dont hate it! I dont hate it!" (*AA*, 378). The narratorial "child" of Miss Coldfield and Mr. Compson has become, so to speak, rhetorically androgynous but in a manner marked more by despair than by triumph.

Yet in another sense it is Miss Rosa and her strange and compelling female speech that are ascendant or at least co–equal with the masculine discourse, for her perpetual encirclement of the linear and teleological

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12 Peter Brooks, 306.

narrative, her insistent repetitions, and her rhapsodic and subversive non–sense are all apparent in the final outpourings of her young male inheritor. His effort to impose "meaning" on what he has heard proves futile. Quentin's experience, like Rosa's and like the whole of the text of *Absalom, Absalom!*, however it may evince the hegemonic force of masculinist linguistic structures, also shows itself vulnerable to radical and emotive de–composition. This greatest of Faulkner's novels also brilliantly enacts the perpetual and transformative struggle at the margins where gender and language intersect.

Noel Polk (Hattiesburg)

Roland Barthes Reads *A Fable*

What Roland Barthes has to say about the nature of myth and of mythical language in his classic meditation on the subject called *Mythologies* seems to me a particularly useful way to approach *A Fable*, for Faulkner's novel, no less than *Mythologies*, is precisely about the nature of myth, as Barthes defines it and its language. The two books are roughly contemporary — *A Fable* was published in 1954, but Faulkner had conceived and begun working on it in 1943; *Mythologies*, published in 1957, was written between 1954 and 1956 — and both books are responses to the post–war ideological scramble in which the Cold War, mass media, and modern technology combined in various ways that drove the wedge between the powerful and the powerless, the individual and the masses, the illusioned and the disillusioned, even more deeply than the war had. Faulkner addressed many of these issues directly in a variety of essays, public letters, and pronouncements during the same period in which Barthes was writing the short essays which make up the first part of his book. Though Faulkner doubtless would not have stated his own motives in precisely the same way, a paragraph in Barthes' preface may well stand as articulating Faulkner's animus, too:

> The starting point of these reflections was usually a feeling of impatience at the sight of the "naturalness" with which newspapers, art and common sense constantly dress up a reality which, even though it is the one we live in, is undoubtedly determined by history. In short, in the account given of our contemporary circumstances, I resented seeing Nature and History confused at every turn, and I wanted to track down, in the decorative display of *what–goes–without–saying*, the ideological abuse which, in my view, is hidden there.[1]

Both Faulkner and Barthes, then, undertake to explore the signs — portraits, images, gestures, words — by which the unstated assumptions, the myths, of our culture are perpetuated. The centrality of signs and of signs as language to *A Fable*'s various meanings is made manifest by the number of signs in the text which announce themselves so loudly as signs, includ-

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[1] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Anette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang), 11. Hereafter cited as "Barthes" in the text.

ing, most significantly, the cross with which Faulkner decorated the pages of the text. We must not forget, in this connection, that Faulkner apparently thought seriously of using the word–less sign, the rebus itself, as the novel's word–less title, making the words "A Fable" a sub–title,[2] using them in effect as what Barthes calls a "metalanguage," and so making of the book itself, the physical object, including the paper and the printed words, an *act* by means of which he was attempting to "speak the book," or "speak the act of writing," or "speak his subject," rather than, in Barthes' metalanguage, speaking *about* it (Barthes, 145–56). If Cowley's report of Faulkner's wishes is to be believed, his desire seems to me a significant indication both of Faulkner's intention in the novel and of his probable sympathy with Barthes' arguments about myth, for that cross is surely the unmistakable sign of the western world's central, practically all–consuming myth.

A Fable is about western civilization's structures, which are necessarily structures of power, about the relationship between the culture's structures and its myths, about how structure and myth maintain themselves, and about how the structures themselves signify those myths: the cross, the rebus, is as much a "structure" of western civilization — two pieces of wood attached horizontally in the service of the rituals of that culture: prohibition, punishment, crucifixion: in short, Order — it is as much a structure of that civilization as the Roman citadel sitting high above the allied headquarters city of Chaulnesmont, and as much as the massive Arc de Triomphe beneath which the old general and the corporal are finally laid to rest.

A good deal of the language of *A Fable* is devoted to the culture's structures. The old general in particular views the world in the terms of its structures. He is, like the man he makes Quartermaster General, an engineer, and is constantly seen juxtaposed against the physical structures of European history; he is the bastion of the structure of western civilization, its scion and heir. Although there is some undeniable difference in the points of view among the three people who narrate his history — the Quartermaster General, Magda, and the Staff Captain who contradicts the Quartermaster General's version of that history — there is no significant doubt, no questioning, of his power or of the reasons behind his top place in the human hierarchy: "You look so exactly like what you are," Marya tells him (*FAB*, 284); the cynical detractors among his St. Cyr coevals believe that his retreat from a Paris assignment is merely a ruse and that he will return to take his rightful place among them precisely because "he was still who he was, male and solitary and heir" (*FAB*, 249). "I am

[2] Malcolm Cowley, *The Faulker–Cowley File: Letters and Memories, 1944–1962* (New York: Viking, 1966), 105.

that I am," God is reported to have told Moses, and so might the old general say: he is who he is, and is therefore impervious to interpretation and has no need to justify himself to anybody. He is, as Chick Mallison said, later, of Flem Snopes, "the capitalist himself who own[s] the parlor and the house, the very circumambience [the dreamers dream] in, who... [is] not only a conservative but a tory too: a pillar, rock–fixed, of things as they are" (*M*, 222).

A good deal of the language of *A Fable*, as I say, is devoted to laying out those structures: hence the several long epic catalogues of categories of peoples in their various hierarchical relationships to one another. It should not surprise us to note that one of the most elaborate of these catalogues is the old general's extended meditation as he looks out of his window on the grieving, inarticulate masses gathered in Chaulnesmont against the execution of the mutinous regiments, their sons, brothers, husbands, and lovers. He classifies all ranks, in order of their descending importance:

> First and topmost were the three flags and the three supreme generals who served them; a triumvirate consecrated and appointed, a constellation remote as planets in their immutability, powerful as archbishops in their trinity, splendid as cardinals in their retinues and myriad as Brahmins in their blind followers; next were the three thousand lesser generals who were their deacons and priests and the hierarchate of their households, their acolytes and bearers of monstrance and host and censer: the colonels and majors who... the captains and subalterns who... the sergeants and corporals who... and the privates who... . (*FAB*, 239–40)

The catalogue runs for nearly four pages, all the way down to the civilian masses who make up "anonymity's absolute," those, he thinks, "whose nameless faceless mass cluttered old Jerusalem and old Rome too." They are merely "tolerated and rightless aliens on their own land and in their own city" (*FAB*, 242). Syntactically, all people in this catalogue are related by the relative clause beginning with "who" or "whose" — twenty–seven such relative clauses hold this catalogue together.

What is most telling in this passage is the *what–goes–without–saying*: first, the general's implicit assumption that things have always been this way, that generals have always been "consecrated and appointed," the "nameless" and "faceless" have always cluttered the streets. That is, the old general begs many questions about history — his rhetoric does not allow for the historical circumstances which make the masses nameless and faceless and which place him, on the other hand, at zenith's apex: who, he does *not* ask, "appointed and consecrated" him? The second unstated assumption of the marshal's meditation, a direct corollary to the first, is contained in the old marshal's equation of the military's structure with the church's; obviously he assumes that God is as much responsible for the

one as for the other: *this is the way things are*. He has thus, in Barthes' terms, transformed history into nature, which transformation Barthes identifies as the "very principle of myth" (Barthes, 129). Further, in this passage at least, the old general seems to be one of Barthes' "innocent" consumers of myth, one who

> does not see it as a semiological system but as an inductive one. Where there is only an equivalence, he sees a kind of causal process: the signifier and the signified have, in his eyes, a natural relationship. This confusion can be expressed otherwise: any semiological system is a system of values; now the myth–consumer takes the signification for a system of facts: myth is read as a factual system, whereas it is but a semiological system. (Barthes, 131)

Myth is conservative, Barthes notes. On the right "it is essential; well–fed, sleek, expansive, garrulous, [the right] invents itself ceaselessly. It takes hold of everything, all aspects of the law, of morality, of esthetics, of diplomacy, of household equipment, of Literature, of entertainment." The oppressed, on the other hand, "is nothing, he has only one language, that of his emancipation; the oppressor is everything, his language is rich, multiform, supple, with all the possible degrees of dignity as his disposal: he has an exclusive right to meta–language. The oppressed *makes* the world, he has only an active, transitive (political) language; the oppressor conserves it, his language is plenary, intransitive, gestural, theatrical: it is Myth" (Barthes, 148–49). Thus the left has only limited access to mythical language: "Revolution is defined as a cathartic act meant to reveal the political load of the world: it *makes* the world; and its language, all of it, is functionally absorbed in this making. It is because it generates speech which is *fully*...political, and not, like myth, speech which is initially political and finally natural, that Revolution excludes myth" (Barthes, 146). Most importantly, "the Left always defines itself in relation to the oppressed, whether proletarian or colonized. Now the speech of the oppressed can only be poor, monotonous, immediate: his destitution is the very yardstick of his language: he has only one, always the same, that of his actions; metalanguage is a luxury, he cannot yet have access to it" (Barthes, 148).

In this formulation, Barthes gives us keys to much of the specific language of *A Fable*. The oppressed in this novel hardly speak at all: the opening paragraph tells us how the masses have all night been huddled "in one vast tongueless brotherhood of dread and anxiety" (*FAB*, 4), and they are described throughout the novel in terms of their almost complete inarticulateness. Even the corporal, their putative savior, hardly speaks at all, never more than several words at a time, and usually only a single short sentence or phrase; never abstractly, but always concretely. He defines himself by his action, or by what Barthes calls a transitive political

language: he "speaks the mutiny," as it were, instead of speaking *about* it or his reasons for it (Barthes, 146). Likewise, though the runner supports the corporal's revolution, he does so by way of his actions — he is a runner — and it is significant that he must finally resort to a completely word–less sign, literally the masonic sign, in order to rally the masses to his cause. The most articulate of the oppressed characters is Marya, who on Wednesday night finally confronts the old general with all of her hatred and reproach. Although replete with assumptions about things she does not, could not possibly understand, her rehearsal of the general's past merely states, but does not try to explain or understand what she accepts as given. Her hatred and frustration do not release in her any kind of doubt or anxiety, or even any of the kind of poetry that Rosa Coldfield's rage does: in over sixteen pages of intense telling, Marya uses only 5 metaphors or similes. She does not, however, need comparisons... "You look so exactly like what you are," she tells him, before she starts.

The agents of the right in *A Fable*, on the other hand, are all perfectly capable of elaborating the myths of the right. Three in particular — General Gragnon, David Levine, the British pilot, and the priest, the chaplain, who attempts to convert the corporal from his martyrdom — articulate various aspects of the nationalistic and patriotic myths that place "Fatherland" or "Motherland" at the center of existence. The myths fail each of them; each refuses a life in which those myths have been exposed as the myths they are, and each commits suicide simultaneously, on Thursday evening. Gragnon is particularly Barthesian in his thoughts about the relationship between the myths that have controlled his life and what he anticipates will be the agent of his death, the bullet they will use to execute him with. Two days after the mutiny he has finally arrived at the old general's headquarters to make in person the request to execute all members of the mutinous regiment and to give the report that has already been prepared and typed in "mimeographed triplicate" copies that lay on the table in front of him: he sees these copies as the "triumvirate markers of his career's sepulture" (*FAB*, 230). As he gives the same report orally, he realizes that "what he was saying ... had no connection at all beyond mere coincidence with what lay on the table." The written speech, indeed, appears to be the *parole*, derived from the mythical *langue*, the unspoken, the *what–goes–without–saying* that made the *parole* necessary:

> The speech was much older than that moment two days ago in the observation post when he discovered that he was going to have to make it. Its conception was the moment he found he was to be posted to officers' school, its birth the day he received the commission, so that it had become, along with the pistol and sabre and the sublieutenant's badges, a part of the equipment with which he would follow and serve his destiny with his life as long as life lasted; its analogous coeval was that one of the live cartridges constant through the pistol's re-

> volving cylinder, against the moment when he would discharge the voluntary lien he had given on his honor by expiating what a civilian would call bad luck and only a soldier disgrace, the bad luck in it being merely this moment now, when the need compelled the speech yet at the same time denied the bullet. In fact, it seemed to him now that the two of them, speech and bullet, were analogous and coeval even in more than birth: analogous in the very incongruity of the origins from which they moved, not even shaped yet, toward their mutual end... (*FAB*, 231)

The Quartermaster General is perhaps the most passionate advocate of the structures that the old general signifies, partly because, an idealist as well as a general, he believes passionately that the old general is in fact mankind's benefactor, its savior. His defense of the old general is an elaborate description of the way myths are made; it is also, not incidentally, an explicit description of the relationships among myth and literature and reality. He makes this speech to the old general, in expressing his own loyalty. After his preparation in the desert, the Quartermaster General contends, the old general

> will appear again, without past, as if you had never been. Because by that time you will no longer exist [for your detractors, those who don't unterstand] except in mutual remembering: a lay figure not only without life but integrated as myth only in mutual confederation: the property of no one of them because you will be the property of all, possessing unity and integration only when your custodians happen to meet from the ends of the earth ... and match fragments and make you whole for a moment; you will lie weightless across the face of France...like a barely remembered odor, a fading word, a habit, a legend...a shadow cast backward on that arid curtain behind Oran beyond which you disappeared, not by the sun but by that quartermaster captain's commission the refusal of which first struck them with terror and rage, until after twenty years not you nor even your two powerful kinsmen will be real, but only that old fading parchment, and it real only because your refusal of it incorporated it onto your legend — the shopworn and now harmless vellum vainly dangling its fading seals and ribbons beside the rent through which you vanished...until at last those who feared you once will have watched you pass out of enmity to amazement: to contempt: to unreality, and at last out of your race and kind altogether, into the dusty lumber room of literature. (*FAB*, 262–63)

The old general himself, finally, is a particularly forceful advocate of his own myths, which have nothing whatever to do with nationalism or patriotism, but only with power and privilege, and that is precisely what he offers his corporal son in their climactic confrontation. Disregard the anguish of those you have elected to die for, he tells his son: "You caused them to fear and suffer, but tomorrow you will have discharged them of both and they will only hate you" (*FAB*, 343). Take the freedom and power and privilege that only I can give you, he insists, but the corporal, of course, will have none of it. Failing to save the corporal from his martyrdom, the old general then lapses into a favorite rhetorical ploy of

the conservative, a diatribe against change, against a future in which man will have become enslaved to "the demonic progeny of his own mechanical curiosity"; he will create, the old general thinks, a monstrous, dehumanized technological and mechanical world which will keep him "clothesless from birth in his individual wheeled and glovelike envelope, with pipes and hoses leading upward from underground reservoirs to charge him with one composite squirt which at one mutual instant will fuel his mobility, pander his lusts, sate his appetites and fire his dreams" (*FAB*, 352–353). In this world the Frankenstein monsters of his own creating will even fight man's wars for him: the old general envisions the last of the mechanical creatures "engaged in the last gigantic wrestling against the final and dying sky robbed even of darkness and filled with the inflectionless uproar of the two mechanical voices bellowing at each other polysyllabic and verbless patriotic nonsense" (*FAB*, 354). To say the least, this is a curious note in his peroration, since he seems to predict as inevitable a world in which the corporal's dream will in fact come relatively true: if there must be wars, why would it not be better to have them fought by machines than by people? What he deplores, I suspect, is what such change will do to the established Order.

From this he moves to the portion of his comments most closely related to Faulkner's Nobel Prize speech, the conclusion of which is that he respects and admires man: "And pride: I am ten times prouder of that immortality which he does possess than ever he of that heavenly one of his delusions." Then follows the well known exchange: "'Because man and his folly —' 'Will endure,' the corporal said. 'They will do more,' the old general said proudly. 'They will prevail'" (*FAB*, 354). This is, of course, the passage which has caused all the trouble. It is an astonishing non–sequitur from anything that precedes it; there's nothing in the novel which justifies this sudden shift, and plenty which condemns it as a blatant hypocrisy. Except for Faulkner's assertion that the old general makes the statement "proudly," it might be possible to see the passage as sarcastic and bitterly ironic. One possible explanation of his change might see him as a father who in fact does care about his son, his audience, and that, having failed to convince him to choose life, simply and compassionately opts to try to give him something to die with, something, that is, to help him endure the rest of his life; he turns instinctively to the pervasive and necessary myth of the culture he is the scion and heir and defender of which insists that human beings are individually sacred, in order to give this specific audience some sense of the worth of the human beings he claims to be dying for. The old marshal understands completely, of course, that he is appropriating that myth to his own purposes.

I'd suggest, too, that Faulkner's troublesome Nobel Prize speech also

articulates a myth which Faulkner likewise understands as a myth, and that, to use Barthes' terms, he deliberately made *that* myth, that speech, "the departure point for a third semiological chain, to take its signification as the first term of a second myth" (Barthes, 135): the second myth, in this case, is *A Fable*. "The power of the second myth," Barthes declares, "is that it gives the first its basis as a naivety which is looked at" (Barthes, 136). Thus Faulkner becomes Barthes' "reader of myths," who has focused "on the mythical signifier as on an inextricable whole made of meaning and form" (Barthes, 128). At Stockholm, Faulkner recognized the ritualistic function of both the prize and the ceremony. He understood the extent to which the entire occasion of the Nobel Prize's presentation was itself a "mythical signifier," understood completely the difference between the ceremony's meaning and its form, and so armed himself with the full range of the myths of his own culture — the significance of the artist, the worth of the human being, the value of "the old verities" — and appropriated both the myths and their cultural rhetoric for the occasion of a public participation in one of his culture's rituals. No less conservative in his politics than the old general, Faulkner was, in his public statements, no less concerned than the old general with preserving Order,[3] and he obliged his culture by serving his turn as the high priest of its myths. What he does in *A Fable* is, simply, to "decipher" those myths, to "reveal their intention" (Barthes, 120).

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[3] Barthes, 139n, notes that it is "remarkable that the adversaries of the bourgeoisie on matters of ethics or esthetics remain for the most part indifferent, or even attached, to its political determinations."

Heide Ziegler (Stuttgart)

Faulkner's Rhetoric of the Comic: *The Reivers*

for Lothar Hönnighausen, who made us prevail

Although by the age of German Romanticism, a philosophy of the comic had already developed, we still tend to link the "comic" with comedy — as opposed to tragedy in the Aristotelian sense. This linkage, however, should not be regarded as a relic of a superannuated tradition. It derives from an affinity between the comic and the stage, the *mise–en–scène*, that will always reassert itself. In comedy, we ordinarily define comic occurrences (namely, those that arouse laughter) in spatial, that is, scenic terms. They need to be describable in visual ways. Of course, in the case of William Faulkner, we deal with epic instead of dramatic forms. Still, we can relate the experience of laughter in a supposed observer or spectator to that in the reader, while maintaining that the author, in the voice of the narrator, creates situations similar to those we find on the stage.

These comic situations have been best described by Henri Bergson in his essay *Le rire*.[1] According to him, people may at times appear to behave in merely mechanical fashion and thereby violate our notions of humanity. These spatially conceived comic situations, however, also contain a temporal element that has to be taken into account. Although the actual space of time between the occurrence of the comic and its reception is brief, this temporal element is usually seen as connected with the reaction to the comic experienced by an observer or spectator. Kant defined this reaction to the comic as the sudden dissolution of suspenseful expectation into nothingness.[2] In other words, laughter releases the one who laughs from an unpleasant feeling. Bergson also believes that the experience of the comic comes from a lack of feeling in the observer or spectator.[3] I would like tentatively to modify Kant's definition in the following manner: the suspenseful expectation aroused in the observer or spectator when he encounters the comic must indeed be dissolved into nothing; but this reac-

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1 Henri Bergson, *Le rire: Essai sur la signification du comique* (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1900).

2 See Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, *Werke*, VIII, ed. Wilhelm Weischedel (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968), 437: "Das Lachen ist ein Affekt aus der plötzlichen Verwandlung einer gespannten Erwartung in nichts."

3 See Bergson, *Le rire*, 149. Here Bergson cites as conditions for the inception of laughter "*insociabilité* du personnage, *insensibilité* du spectateur."

tion ought to refer to the dissolution of a temporal element within the comic itself, and not to the space of time between its occurrence and its reception. For only when this release from an unpleasant feeling can be calculated beforehand would one — as is common — wish to prolong or to repeat the experience of the comic. This fact becomes important when dealing, not with comic situations on the stage, but with comic narrative contexts, which remove the reader from the scene.

If, with regard to Faulkner, we concentrated on the depiction of the comic in his earlier fiction — on short stories, for instance, "Mule in the Yard" (1934), "Uncle Willy" (1935), and "Shingles for the Lord" (1943), or parts of novels like *The Hamlet* (1940) and *Go Down, Moses* (1942) — we should find situations similar to those we find on stage, some even resembling slapstick comedy. In other words, Faulkner here concentrates on the scenic element of the comic, with the comic always being confined to brief descriptions. Faulkner did not arrive at a consistent rhetoric of the comic until his last novel, *The Reivers* (1962); I would like to contend in this paper that the reason for this postponed development is the lack of a consistent theme in any of his former works that would allow for a steady dissolution of the temporal element — the element of narrative — into a spatial one, in order to achieve a continuous series of comic effects. The consistent theme in *The Reivers* which brings about this movement from time to space is the historically conditioned increase of abstraction in all human dealings relating to money. Since *The Reivers'* narrative point of view is retrospective, money dealings here can regain their former organic concreteness, as, for example, in the swap of an automobile for a horse. By recovering this kind of concreteness, the novel fulfills the requirements of scenic comedy while at the same time offering a persistent, nostalgic, yet hidden utopian perspective on human relationships. Money and all human actions relating to it are generally taken so seriously because man has to bridge the gap between his existential needs and the uncertainty as to his ability to satisfy them. The future as the realm of uncertainty thus becomes more and more worrisome, because one's existential needs always remain the same. Any appearance of a reversal in this development will therefore be a relief, as long as this reversal does not threaten the achievements of the present. Such a relief can be achieved when the reversal takes the shape of a reminiscence, a fictional reminiscence in particular, since all money dealings lose their threatening quality once they are in the past.

The original title of The *Reivers* was *The Horse Thieves: A Reminiscence*. Of this title the subtitle was retained, and the novel is indeed conceived in its entirety as a reminiscence. Lucius Priest, now sixty–five years old, tells his grandson an episode that happened to him in 1905

when he was eleven years old. Within the plot of the novel the most important relationship is also the emotional bond between grandfather and grandson, in this case between the boy Lucius and his own grandfather. This double generational leap serves not only to bridge the period between the Civil War and the narrative present. It also connects a present story with past experiences, thus creating an extended space within which the comic may develop, since this metaphorical space is neither all real nor all fictional and is therefore devoid of any immediate claims either on the reader or the fictional listener, Lucius Priest's own grandson. Moreover, through this double generational leap, the necessary rebellion of the son against the father can be successfully circumvented, giving way to the more conciliatory perspective common between grandparents and grandchildren. This perspective permits the gentlemanly ideal of the Old South, represented by Lucius' grandfather, to appear as the revived code of his grandson and perhaps his great-great-grandson.[4] The unchanging setting, seen in relation to the flux of time, guarantees the continuance of this code.

The idea of time gradually supplanted by space[5] relates to the idea of overcoming the threat of fatherhood and of money. The connection between time and fatherhood is established at the outset of the novel, when Boon Hogganbeck comes jumping into the office of Lucius' father, lunging for the pistol Mr. Maury keeps in his desk, because he wants to shoot Ludus, another employee at the depot owned by the Priests. Actually, the real danger to Ludus is slight, since Boon is a notoriously bad shot, incapable of hitting anything — at least anything he is aiming at. But of course, there is the danger that he may accidentally hit someone else. Lucius' father, however, does not seem to be aware of this possibility:

> But Father just sat there. I'm sure you have often noticed how ignorant people beyond thirty or forty are. I dont mean forgetful. That's specious and easy, too easy to say *Oh papa* (or grandpa) *or mama* (or grandma), *they're just old; they have forgotten.* Because there are some things, some of the hard facts of life, that you dont forget, no matter how old you are. There is a ditch, a chasm; as a boy you crossed it on a footlog. You come creeping and doddering back at thirty–five or forty and the footlog is gone; you may not even remember the footlog but at least you dont step out onto that empty gravity that footlog once spanned. That was Father then. (*R*, 5)

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4 Allen Shepherd maintains that for Lucius his grandfather is "both supreme power and personification of the code." (Allen Shepherd, "Code and Comedy in Faulkner's *The Reivers*," *Literatur in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 6, 1973, 48). See also Wolf Kindermann, *Analyse und Synthese im Werk William Faulkners: Generation und "community" in der Entwicklung seines Denkens*, Anglo-American Forum, 17 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1984), 167ff.

5 Heinrich Straumann demonstrates that in *The Reivers* for the first time in a Faulkner novel space takes precedence over time (See Heinrich Straumann, *William Faulkner* [Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1968], 281–82).

Although Lucius' father is characterized as ignorant, not just as forgetful, this harsh judgment on the part of his son seems to be rendered in an almost impersonal fashion. The reader might be tempted to attribute this impersonal tone to the fact that Lucius Priest tells the story decades later; this explanation is not very satisfactory, however, since the perspective chosen is clearly that of the child. The implication rather seems to be that fathers in general tend to be ignorant, whereas grandfathers, although they may be forgetful, are not — otherwise this grandfather, Lucius Priest the narrator, could not trust *his* grandson, the listener of the story, to understand him. The difference between fathers and grandfathers is decisive. Forgetfulness comes with the passing of time but does not pertain to important matters, which are always remembered — that is, consciously protected against the challenge of time; ignorance is the result of a failure even to acknowledge the passing of time. If Lucius' father were to understand that he cannot regain that footlog separating childhood from adolescence because it has disappeared, he would also understand that life must be defended against the impact of time. Were he to gain this insight, he would no longer be ignorant. Rhetorically, this passage seems to suspend the action, that is, Boon's attempt to shoot Ludus, without being a so–called "frozen moment." On the contrary, the image here is spatial — the footlog which spans the chasm — and is used to remind the reader that only to a child can life appear as a timeless continuum. Therefore, Lucius' father's ridiculous attempt to step out onto that empty gravity which the footlog once spanned, demonstrating his inability to understand Boon's childlike behavior for what it is, presupposes a lack of insight he does not even recognize. His ignorance becomes blatant when he has to be told by his eleven–year–old son that Boon, after Mr. Maury's refusal to give him his own pistol, will attempt to "borrow" that of John Powell, another employee at the depot.

When a week (and a chapter) later Lucius, together with Boon, embarks on an adventurous trip to Memphis in a car "borrowed" from his grandfather, we know from the beginning that he has to assume the role of "boss," that his as yet undeveloped potential for responsibility will be severely tested. For Boon, ostensibly the only responsible white adult on this trip — on which they have been joined by Ned, one of the blacks working for Lucius' grandfather — has already revealed his unreliability. The necessity of dealing with this unreliability is explained by the narrator:

> Boon was a corporation, a holding company in which the three of us — McCaslins, De Spain and General Compson — had mutually equal but completely undefined shares of responsibility, the one and only corporation rule being that whoever was nearest at the crises would leap immediately into whatever breach Boon had this time created or committed or simply fallen heir to; he (Boon) was a mutual be-

> nevolent protective benefit association, of which the benefits were all Boon's and the mutuality and the benevolence and the protecting all ours. (*R*, 18–9)

The comic effect of this description rests on the discrepancy between the metaphorical and literal use of the term "corporation." Faulkner's metaphor not only characterizes Boon, but also reevaluates the two realms of perception linked through this metaphor. Buying into a corporation usually implies the buyer's expectation of financial gain. Here however, Boon, himself the corporation or association, gets all the benefits, not because of his evil machinations, but because the corporation is of a special kind. Owned by three Jefferson families, it was set up for the very purpose of protecting Boon. Not only does Faulkner here indirectly criticize American business life; he also divests fatherhood of its individuality, supplanting it with a form of communal responsibility. Thus the notions of fatherhood and money are fused.

The assumption of responsibility for the actions of someone else or even for the description of these actions should be indirect, because otherwise the person thus protected would be burdened with the very obligations which he has proven incapable of facing. Boon accordingly does not have the slightest idea that he is a "mutual benevolent protective benefit association," the center of a form of communal responsibility. The narrator, too, partakes of this protective and benevolent attitude towards Boon. Boon, through his unchanging childishness, forces the child Lucius to step in and assume an active responsibility for him, which the old Lucius Priest still exerts through his use of the "corporation" metaphor. Successful financial enterprises normally guarantee one's power in the community; but here, the idea of power is tacitly converted into an inherited sense of duty, that is, a communal virtue.

All the episodes related in *The Reivers*, which interweave to make up the plot, concern money. The three heroes, Lucius, Boon, and Ned, continually question its value, which is both abstract and temporal, in an attempt to replace it with concrete and spatial *communal* values.[6] The epitome of unmitigated belief in monetary value and therefore the backdrop for the heroes' struggle is Corrie's nephew Otis. Otis, who is fifteen years old and looks five years younger, is the cowardly counterpart to the courageous eleven–year–old Lucius. He is always pressed for time, since time for him means money; but he does not take up the appropriate concrete space, never even reaching the normal size of a fifteen–year–old:

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[6] Because of his Marxist approach, a critic like Christopher Müller is incapable of recognizing that Faulkner, although at times bent on social satire, still celebrates communal instead of individual values in his last novel. (See Christopher Müller, "Zu William Faulkners Roman *The Reivers*," *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik*, 24, 1976, 260–64).

> "Jack," Otis said. "Spondulicks. Cash. When I think about all that time I wasted in Arkansas before anybody ever told me about Memphis. ... When I think of all them years I spent over there on a durn farm in Arkansas with Memphis right here across the river and I never even knowed it. How if I had just knowed when I was four or five years old, what I had to wait until just last year to find out about, sometimes I just want to give up and quit. But I reckon I wont. I reckon maybe I can make it up." (*R*, 142–43).

For Otis, every moment which he does not spend in the pursuit — legal or illegal — of money is wasted. Like Jason Compson in *The Sound and the Fury*, he is completely future–oriented. His counterpart, Lucius, on the other hand, is steeped in the past, the chivalric tradition of the Old South. But unlike Quentin Compson, he is capable of relating this tradition to the present, thus creating a space for the unfolding of his personality. After Otis has stolen the gold tooth from Minnie in order to sell it, Corrie, crying, asks Lucius if it was his mother who made him promise never to steal anything. She hopes to prove that Otis never had a chance to learn decent behavior, because he is an orphan. Lucius refuses to accept this explanation for Otis' lack of communal values and his obsession with money. He tells Corrie that his mother did not have to make him promise never to steal, because "you dont take things" (*R*, 218). His behavior, in other words, does not depend on individual upbringing, but on the received code of gentlemanly behavior as represented, not taught, by his grandfather, a model of the chivalric tradition of the Old South.

Lucius defends Corrie's honor against Otis, simply because a lady's honor ought to be defended. He thereby not only persuades Corrie to give up her profession as a prostitute, he also restores her outraged honor. Faulkner's point is not that Corrie's profession is immoral (after all, Miss Reba, her employer, is a model of the whore with a heart of gold), but that Corrie has been exchanging expressions of emotion for money, thereby not so much debasing those emotions as leaving no space for them to unfold or for others to respond to them. Only when he can no longer pay for Corrie's favors does Boon begin to understand that he loves her. The equation of the spending of emotions and the gaining of money has left no space for the development of the comic either, which can only come to the fore when Boon suddenly becomes grumpy and jealous of each one of Corrie's suitors, an almost impossible emotional task to undertake and fit only for someone of Boon's Herculean proportions. As with Otis, his actual size (he is six feet four inches tall and weighs two hundred and forty pounds) represents in concrete form his more abstract gigantic emotional endeavor, once more literally replacing the abstract with the concrete.

This comic paradigm — time and money versus space and communal values — appears throughout the novel. *The Reivers* starts with Boon Hoggan-

beck "borrowing" John Powell's pistol; then Boon and Lucius "borrow" the car from Lucius' grandfather in order to go to Memphis; finally Ned "borrows" the horse Coppermine in order to win a race. Each of the three heroes of the novel is thus engaged in an analogous deed usually relating to the acquisition of money. Here, however, the deed serves to tie a number of characters together and to place a communal value on their "borrowings." In case the reader is tempted to call these actions "stealing" rather than "borrowing," he learns the difference through Otis' theft of Minnie's gold tooth, the tooth she has worked many extra hours to buy and which she does not even use for eating because it is too valuable to be purely functional. It is this non–functional value Minnie attributes to the tooth which in fact gives Otis a chance to steal it, since Minnie takes the tooth *out* when she eats. Otis uses this change of location to privilege time, for stealing means having no intention of giving the stolen object back or even of trading it for another object, but instead selling it for money, and thus making the act itself irreversible. Historically speaking, Otis does not understand the idea of exchange value, which presupposes that one can trade an object back and forth. When one exchanges an object for its money value on the other hand, the object itself is lost. By contrast, all the acts of "borrowing" in the novel are reversible, thus making time itself appear to be reversible.

The question is how this concept of temporal reversibility, which is but a metaphor for the privileging of space and communal values, affects Faulkner's style in *The Reivers* and guarantees the novel's consistent comedy. One of the recognized features of Faulkner's style is that in his use of words he never scrimps or saves, thus himself defying the virtue of thrift. In addition, in *The Reivers* abstraction is counteracted by the impact of metaphors that express temporal reversibility. This is not to say that Faulkner, in his last novel, betrays his former predilection for general statements. Here, however, the form of these statements allows for their scenic representation. For example, one of the dominating oppositions in *The Reivers* is between Virtue and Non–virtue, both spelled with a capital letter. Just as Lucius, Boon, and Ned are, so to speak, the tripartite knight–errants of medieval tales,[7] who, by being thus divided, serve to democratize this aristocratic concept, Virtue and Non–virtue are not simply the allegorical medieval personifications of Good and Evil. Rather they show how the democratic mind no longer perceives the human soul as the exalted battlefield of virtues and vices. The modern force conflicting with Virtue is not even Vice, but simply nondescript Non–virtue, and

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[7] See Olga W. Vickery, *The Novels of William Faulkner*, rev. ed. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), 233.

they may still fight *over* the human soul, but no longer *for* it:[8]

> [I have] noticed in my time how quite often the advocates and even the practitioners of virtue evidently have grave doubts of their own regarding the impregnability of virtue as a shield, putting their faith and trust not in virtue but rather in the god or goddess whose charge virtue is; bypassing virtue as it were in allegiance to the Over–goddess herself, in return for which the goddess will either divert temptation away or anyhow intercede between them. (*R*, 51)

The orientation here seems to go back even beyond the middle ages to antiquity: not the support of one's own virtue, but that of the goddess Virtue is being sought. The implication seems to be that democratic man, instead of relying on his own virtue, actually shies away from responsibility, and, like a gambler, relies on fortune or folly instead. On closer scrutiny, however, the former notion reveals itself as one of style, the latter as one of satire. Thus, Faulkner's comic style shields the reader from exposure to his own lack of responsibility — not because Faulkner wants to take the edge off his satire, but because he wants to create a safe space within which the reader may learn to face his own deficiencies in order to learn how to overcome them. This is the hidden utopian dimension of the novel.

Faulkner's generous, even abundant, style in *The Reivers* is thus more than an authorial whim; it is the helping hand he lends to his reader. And it is the result of a sense of humanity which has been hard–earned — like the ultimate acknowledgment of the meaning of the experience of the Civil War for the South, which took Faulkner all of his writing life to accept. Only in *The Reivers* can he finally come to terms with "that Cause which, the longer I live the more convinced I am, your spinster aunts to the contrary, that whoever lost it, it wasn't us" (*R*, 234). This is the author's own voice, identifying with the ruminating voice of sixty-five–year–old Lucius Priest. In this way the author's verbal generosity corresponds with the narrator's sense of responsibility, and together they constitute the conditions for the development of the comic in *The Reivers*. For generosity and responsibility both require a sense of structure as well as liberality, and the comic is a highly structured phenomenon. Although *The Reivers*, in centering on a horse race and the betting connected with this race, ultimately seems to utilize simple stage–related comedy, even this climactic situation has to be seen as originating in complicated speculations, which make the horse race part of an extended, yet time–defying plot–within–a–plot. Ned has secretly traded the car for Coppermine, which, to complicate matters, has already been stolen. In order to get

[8] By contrast, Corrie understands that she has regained her honor when she tells Lucius that "I've had people — drunks — fighting *over* me, but you're the first one ever fought *for* me" (*R*, 159; my emphasis).

back his grandfather's car, Lucius has to win the race on Coppermine, appropriately renamed Lightning for the occasion, the money-related name giving way to a time–defying one. The winnings from this race are intended to be used to buy back the car and also pay the debts of Bobo Beauchamp, a relative of Ned, who is also kin to Lucius' grandfather. Things are yet further complicated by the fact that the town where the race is held does not permit "foreigners" to enter their horses in the contest, since each inhabitant of the town wants to enjoy his "inalienable constitutional right of free will and private enterprise which has made our country what it is" (*R*, 215). The townspeople insist on a private race between two local horses, in which strangers may not participate except by betting. Private enterprise and communal values are thus contrasted in *The Reivers*. Private enterprise is not truly the right of all, but actually creates differences between human beings, as everyone tries to gain an advantage over his neighbor. Such behavior is exactly the opposite of that of the three Jefferson families who share in the responsibility for Boon, the one closest always willing to support Boon in crisis, even though nothing is to be gained by this support, in fact, *because* nothing is to be gained by this support.

Faulkner had intended *The Reivers* to be "a sort of Huck Finn,"[9] and the interpretation of individual versus communal values as implied in *The Reivers* benefits from a comparison with Twain's novel. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is constructed on the basic opposition between the river and the society that inhabits its banks. In order to leave behind society's crasser exhibitions of moral hypocrisy, all the hero has to do is to escape to the raft once more, whereas in *The Reivers* the opposition is between Jefferson and Memphis — that is between life in a traditional society and life in a modern society. Lucius is thus never able to escape society. He has to learn that his childhood, in which his moral context consisted of his family's values, is over and must give way to adulthood, which means having to defend his values against various challenges. Huck Finn's author granted his hero the opportunity to remain basically the same; Huck just has to understand that he must reject the values of the society he was brought up in and learn to trust his own moral judgment. The case of Lucius Priest is much more complicated, and thus we need the reassurance, through his role as story–telling grandfather, that his development was in fact successful:

> I mean, if those four days — the lying and deceiving and tricking and decisions and undecisions, and the things I had done and seen and heard and learned that Mother and Father wouldn't have let me do and see and hear and learn — the

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[9] See Joseph Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography*, II (New York: Random House, 1974), 1794.

> things I had had to learn that I wasn't even ready for yet, had nowhere to store them nor even anywhere to lay them down; if all that had changed nothing, was the same as if it had never been — nothing smaller or larger or older or wiser or more pitying — then something had been wasted, thrown away, spent for nothing; either it was wrong and false to begin with and should never have existed, or I was wrong or false or weak or anyway not worthy of it. (*R*, 299–300)

Only here, at the end of the novel, does the continual redefinition of time in spatial terms in *The Reivers* become problematical. Although it served to guarantee the continuation of the comic in the novel, it is ultimately not sufficient to establish a more general sense of humanity. Lucius is home once more but, as he says, has no place there to "store" the things he has had to learn but is not ready for yet; there is no place where he can "lay them down." Although Jefferson has not changed during the four days of his absence, he will nevertheless have to entrust those things to precarious time in order for them to bear fruit. Humanity for Faulkner is thus related to the idea of growth, and to the progress of time, a more natural process than that of monetary gain and one that relates to fictional instead of functional language. It appears only natural then that Faulkner, with the development of his narrative skills, would use them to produce a comic novel — in an attempt to free his fellow men from the bondage of money as represented by functional language, and to reestablish, through his fiction, a historical place where the old virtues could be reenacted. In this sense *The Reivers*, although perhaps not planned as a last novel,[10] *is* Faulkner's fictional testament to humanity.

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[10] See James B. Meriwether, "The Novel Faulkner Never Wrote: His *Golden Book* or *Doomsday Book*," *American Literature*, 42 (1970/71), 93-96; 94.

Ilse Dusoir Lind (New York)

The Language of Stereotype in "Death Drag"

This essay is part of a larger study of Faulkner's attitude towards Jews. One cannot go far in the study of this topic without discovering that the language which Faulkner employs in dealing with this ethnic minority reflects the general way in which language is linked to the social structures of its time. Socio–linguistics also contributes to this study through recent investigations of stereotypes as a linguistic phenomenon in various aspects, including the causes that underlie their formation, the pragmatic functions they serve within given social contexts, and the relationship which exists between the acquisition of ethnic attitudes, through language, and the formation of identity itself in the early years of life.[1] My immediate purpose here is to employ socio–linguistic findings as one of several tools that are useful in analyzing the language of racial stereotype in Faulkner's short story, "Death Drag" (*CS*, 185-205).[2] My plan in discussing the story is three–fold: first, to provide some pertinent background information; second, to show how a stereotype appears in the story in full-blown form; and — finally — to consider the influence which our understanding of Faulkner's use of a racial stereotype exerts upon critical interpretation of the story as a whole.

"Death Drag" was written during the early weeks of December, 1930, as America was entering the second year of the Great Depression.[3] Many psychological influences of a complex kind contributed to the wasteland mood of the tale, as to other works by Faulkner stemming from this period. Among factors of an external nature bearing directly on "Death Drag," several can be mentioned. One is the pressing nature of the financial difficulties which confronted the Falkner family as a whole at this time. Faulkner's grandfather, during the very month that the story was

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1 Of particular use here are Adam Schaff, "The Pragmatic Functions of Stereotypes," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 45 (1984), 89–100, and Carol Eastman, "Language, Ethnic Identity and Change," *Linguistic Minorities, Policies and Pluralism*, ed. John Edwards (London: Academic Press, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984), 259–276.

2 Joseph Blotner, *Faulkner, A Biography* (New York: Random House, 1974) provides the starting point for this inquiry.

3 Blotner, *Faulkner, A Biography*, 633–680, and Hans Skei, *William Faulkner: The Short Story Career* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1981).

written, faced the closing of the bank to which the Falkners had shifted allegiance following Col. Falkner's conflict with Joseph Parks over fiscal policy at the First National Bank of Oxford a decade earlier.[4] Ironically, the bank with which the Falkners had severed connection, of which Hyman Friedman had been the director in charge of investments, managed to survive this nationwide banking crisis.[5] Faulkner's father, throughout 1930, was without gainful employment, following the loss of his university post the previous year. Faulkner himself, meanwhile, after having strengthened his ties to his patrician background by marrying Estelle Oldham, was now trying to maintain a large household without any regular or dependable source of income. Another external factor bearing on this story was the appearance of a barnstormer in Oxford to present an air circus much resembling the one described in the story, shortly after the Oxford airport was opened. His name was Irvin, and he was possibly Jewish.[6] Still another external factor was Faulkner's participation in September, 1930, in the home entertainment comedy, "Corporal Eagen," playing the role of what was then called "the Hebe" in such comedies, about which something more needs to be said.[7]

"Corporal Eagen" as an entertainment was devised by the Stewart brothers of Iowa, as a species of popular drama in which local citizens could play all the parts with only a little coaching. It was marketed by a fleet of salespersons who traveled to small towns throughout the United States.[8] As with the air show described in "Death Drag," the booker of the entertainment sought a local sponsor to help secure the proceeds. All the apparatus for the performance was provided by the booker, who served as a dramatic coach. Faulkner, in the role of Izzy Goldstein in "Corporal

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4 Blotner, 678.

5 For this information, I am indebted to the daughter of Hyman Friedman, Mrs. Jeanette Doerflinger, in conversations taking place on May 13 and 15, 1987.

6 Conversations with Faulkner's nephew, Jimmy Faulkner, August 27, 1986.

7 For information about the term "Hebe," I am indebted to Prof. Brooks McNamara, Tisch School of the Arts, New York University. Prof. McNamara is the author of *Step Right Up* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), and editor of *American Popular Entertainments: A Collection of Jokes, Monologues and Comedy Routines* (New York: Performing Arts, 1983). For more general background, I have drawn upon Martin W. Laforse and James A. Drake, *Popular Culture and American Life* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1981).

8 An account of the methods of the Stewart brothers in promoting the entertainments which they produced under the name of Universal Producing Company is given by Lorelei F. Eckey, Maxine Allen Schoyer and William T. Schoyer, *1,000 Broadways, Hometown Talent on Stage* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1982), which also describes other such popular dramatic productions. I am deeply indebted to Caroline Schaffner, curator of the Theater Museum of Repertoire Americana, located in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, for sending me a photocopy of her husband's personal copy of the original script of "Corporal Eagen" and for her comments on such productions. I also wish especially to thank Dr. George Thompson, Associate Curator, Elmer Holmes Bobst Library, New York University, for his inspired sleuthing as a reference librarian, which led to my acquisition of this script.

Eagen," wore the wax nose which was supplied with the part, spoke in Yiddish–English dialect, and gestured like the formulaic figure of stage comedy.[9] As Izzy, he tried to steal Corporal Eagen's girl and to trick him out of two dollars in a bet. Throughout the play, he spoke often of his "Poppa," who owned a second–hand clothing store in New York. Poppa also appeared on stage, making unwanted advances to a young woman on the post and uttering such predictable remarks as that there's only one thing worse than getting killed in a war — losing all your money.[10]

In the text of his story, Faulkner introduces a barnstormer and aerial stuntman named Ginsfarb — like Shylock, he lacks a first name — through the familiar language of comic stereotype. This is shown in Faulkner's description of Ginsfarb's disproportionately large nose, his "shark"–like jaw, and his possession of other vaudevillian attributes, like his tight–fitting, brightly patterned jacket and his "Weber and Fields" diction (*CS*, 187). Ginsfarb's preoccupation with money provides the story's plot: he is willing to risk his life in order to collect the full $100 he thinks due him for performing his act, which he prices at $100 because it entails risking his life. Once Ginsfarb, as a character, is established in the story in terms of the comic stereotype, he takes on many of the more ominous characteristics of the broader uses of prejudice, however. For example, Faulkner associates him with the criminal Jew of stereotype by stressing his egregious violation of the laws of aviation, incorporating many images of dirt and soilure into the text to convey the idea that Ginsfarb's operation, as a money–making enterprise, is a dirty business.[11] He also weaves into the text another stereotypic notion — that Jews are unpatriotic. This is demonstrated when Ginsfarb, upon being asked whether he got his limp in the air war, asks: "The war? ...Why should I fight in a war?" (*CS*, 192). Still another prejudice of the era which finds voice in

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9 Laforse and Drake, *Popular Culture and American Life*, 131–41.

10 In the script of the play, when Abbie Goldstein learns that a young woman has received some "terrible news" about a boyfriend, he cries aloud, wrings his hankerchief, and says, "Vorse than being vounded (crying more) — Vorse than being keeled — (crying more) — oh then there can be only vun thing vorse, the poor boy lost all his money" (13).

11 For a study of the sterotype in its many somber manifestations in American culture, see Michael N. Dobkowski, *The Tarnished Dream, The Basis of American Anti–Semitism* (Westport, Conn., Greenwood Press, 1979) and the more specialized inquiries in David A. Gerber, ed., *Anti–Semitism in American History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press), 1986. The sense of something dirty, even to the point of being deathly, is signaled in the story from the first paragraph. For example, the newly arrived plane is "empty and *dead*, patched and shabby and painted awkwardly with a single coat of *dead black* ..." (*CS*, 185). This emphasis continues throughout the text, in references to the pilot's *dirty* coverall (*CS*, 186), to his *dirty*–looking eyeballs (*CS*, 187) and to his *dirty* helmet (*CS*, 187). Ginsfarb wears a torn helmet held together by tape "almost *black* with *dirt* and grease" (*CS*, 188). At the end of the story, the pilot has tears streaking down "his *dirty* unshaven face," as he stands in his "thin, *dirty* garment, with his unshaven face, *dirty* and gaunt" (*CS*, 203). My emphasis.

the text concerns the then-prevalent attitudes concerning the physical bravery of Jews. A disparaging comment relating to this is expressed by Captain Warren — with reference to Ginsfarb's use of the name Demon Duncan for his act — when Warren says that he'd "pay to see a man [named Ginsfarb] jump from a plane before he'd pay to see a man named Duncan do it" (*CS*, 195). The derogatory implications of such a remark leave no doubt that Faulkner had a full command of the language of ethnic stereotypes which was in casual use in this region — and in middle America at large during his period — at almost all levels. At the same time, the closed system of narration that is employed in the story, which augments the voice of a generalized local narrator by that of the locally respected Captain Warren, makes it difficult to the point of impossibility to determine the extent to which the author shares any or all of these prejudices.

Coming to the question of how the stereotype functions in relation to the interpretation of the story as a whole, we find that — in order to give a full account of the matter — we must also take into consideration the many ways that Ginsfarb is the opposite of the stereotype. He is not motivated by greed, for example, but by grim necessity. Far from lacking physical courage, he displays a fearlessness in performance that is breath-taking. Soaring in the air, defying the laws of gravity, he seems, in some ways, to possess powers verging on the magical, like a figure of fable. Nor is he, by any means, the merely farcical stereotype of comedy, for he has a tragic face, so extreme in its tragic intensity that he seems a type of sad clown (*CS*, 187). These more positive aspects have inclined some critics to view him as another of Faulkner's emblematic survivors[12] and to interpret the story as a whole as expressing a theme relating to endurance in the face of overwhelming obstacles. But such a critical reading, while based on elements which are present in the text in the literal sense, does not do justice to the darkness of the story's humor or to the complex issues raised by the stereotype which, until they are resolved, mar the moral value of the work. Consequently, we are forced, in our search for meaning, to look to what may be implied in the text without its being directly stated, to something that may exist by way of negation, as it were, or as a type of non-utterance. We find this in the parallels that exist between Ginsfarb and the author. For example, both are "quite short" (*CS*, 186). Both are involved with flying. Both are very hard-pressed for money. Even more significantly, both are public entertainers — Ginsfarb through his aerial act, and Faulkner through the short stories which he is

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[12] See, for example, Irving Howe, *William Faulkner: A Critical Study* (New York: Vintage, 1952), 264, and William Van O'Connor, *The Tangled Fire of William Faulkner* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1954), 89.

writing at this time by the dozen for such popular magazines as *Story*, *American Caravan* and *The Saturday Evening Post*.

The number and the nature of these parallels make it clear that a relationship of some sort between Ginsfarb and the author exists, through which ideas and attitudes central to the story are expressed. But what are they? There is no reason to assume that the reader will find it any easier to state the author's idea in explicit terms here than the author himself does, since he chooses to resort to the poetic strategies of indirection to communicate his meaning. However, assuming that Ginsfarb is a metaphoric projection of the author, as he seems to be, he can be construed to represent Faulkner's deeply felt frustrations at this time in relation to his being a patrician without money and a genius who is forced to withhold the full exercise of his powers in order to attend to the grubby work of turning out short stories in order to meet immediate expenses. The long–standing association of Jews with money suggests that scapegoating is involved here, but also that the creative spirit of the artist is represented by the figure that flies freely in the air as an aerial stuntsman, like the poet on his flying horse in "Carcassonne" and like the flying Bayard Sartoris who served with the Canadian Air Force in World War I. Many more associations cluster around Ginsfarb as a metaphoric projection of the author than can be explored in the short space available here.[13] Suffice it to say, however, that when considered in terms of the implications of these parallels, "Death Drag" is a remarkable literary study of the intra–psychic processes involved in the use of stereotype. Taken in its entirety, the story illustrates how the self in its inner turmoil projects its negative feelings on the socially rejected Other at the same time that it binds itself to the Other through psychic identification with it. Faulkner's perception of these processes within himself, then, is another instance of his probing of "the dark ... heart of things." The essential somberness of this comic tale finds expression as well in the dark coloration of its imagery, as exemplified in recurrent use of the words "black" and "death." As so often in Faulkner's fictions, the reader must do the work of putting it all together. When he does so, he is rewarded with a view of Faulkner's expressive daring in his use of the specific language of racial stereotype combined with his intellectual understanding of the pragmatic functions served by stereotype. Through this penetration, the stereotype which he introduces into the story is also deconstructed by it. Through his self–identification with Ginsfarb, furthermore, he transforms the stereotype in large measure, putting it to service in relation to a worthy artistic aim.

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[13] A clear exposition of this process is offered in James M. Mellard, "Lacan and Faulkner: A Post–Freudian Analysis of Humor in the Fiction," *Faulkner and Humor: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1984* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1986), 195–215.

Karl F. Zender (Davis, California)

Contemporary History in *Absalom, Absalom!*: Some Directions for Study

A story, perhaps apocryphal, has it that a critic once ended a conference on psychoanalytic themes in Shakespeare by saying "the conclusion is clear: sell Oedipal, buy pre–Oedipal." My reading of recent criticism leads me to a similar conclusion about Faulkner. It is "sell religion, buy politics and history." One of the most energizing advances of recent criticism has been its resituating of the moral and ethical themes identified by the first generation of Faulkner critics in political and historical contexts. Where once we spoke of the discovery of evil or of the death of love, now we speak of the critique of patriarchy, the politics of gender, and the politics of interpretation. Similarly, we have begun to see that history functions in Faulkner's fiction in more various ways than we had formerly imagined. Where before we thought of history in relation to Faulkner primarily as either the history of his region or as the idea of history — history with a capital "H" — now we are starting to notice how frequently Faulkner's fiction reflects the ideological, social, and economic concerns of the modern age. We no longer find it absurd, for example, to think of Faulkner as a writer of the Great Depression, or to see in his late fiction a reflection of Cold War tensions and concerns.

Nowhere has this shift in critical focus been more rewarding, yet more tantalizingly incomplete, than in relation to *Absalom, Absalom!*. On the one hand, the novel has been the recipient of a number of excellent recent reinterpretations of its political significance. (One thinks, for example, of Carolyn Porter's challenge to Cleanth Brooks's interpretation of the Sutpen story and of David Krause's explorations of the ideological implications of the theme of reading.)[1] But on the other hand, *Absalom, Absalom!* has not provoked many readings that relate it to the history of the period in which it was written. For whatever reason, critics have by and large

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[1] Carolyn Porter, *Seeing and Being: The Plight of the Participant Observer in Emerson, James, Adams, and Faulkner* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1981); David Krause, "Reading Shreve's Letters and Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*," *Studies in American Fiction*, 11 (1983), 153–69; "Reading Bon's Letter and Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*," *PMLA*, 99 (1984), 225–41; and "Opening Pandora's Box: Re–Reading Compson's Letter and Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*," *The Centennial Review*, 30 (1986), 358–82.

been content to treat history in *Absalom, Absalom!* in the traditional ways mentioned above. In this essay, I wish to take a step toward overcoming this neglect, by identifying some contemporary historical contexts in which the novel — especially its last two chapters — might profitably be read. My comments are intended to be speculative, not definitive. I do not plan to set down conclusions but simply to suggest some directions for further study.

Each of the contexts I have to offer is a version of the conflict between progress and reaction characteristic of the 1930s. The first is political in character. It is the rhetoric of left and right of the 1930s. In a provocative essay read at the second International Faulkner Symposium and reprinted in *Intertextuality in Faulkner,* Stephen Ross relates the style of *Absalom, Absalom!* to the southern love of oratory and to Bakhtin's distinction between monological and dialogical discourse.[2] He argues that the tendency of the various narrative voices of *Absalom, Absalom!* to collapse into a single, florid, oratorical "overvoice" expresses the symbolic role of fatherhood in the novel — the role of fatherhood, that is, as a principle of authority and as a claim that meaning is objective, determinant, and unequivocal. I find this an extremely rewarding way of approaching the novel; but I think its utility would be increased if we were also to read the novel's rhetoric in relation to the dominant political rhetorics of the 1930s: the rhetoric of fatherland and the rhetoric of comradeship and brotherhood.

If we think of *Absalom, Absalom!* in relation to these two rhetorics, then an observation immediately suggests itself. Instead of depicting a single "overvoice," as Ross suggests, the novel actually depicts two. In "Ad Astra," a story written around 1930, Faulkner shows us a young German baron attempting to explain why he has rejected his title and inheritance. His father, the young baron says, "talks of Germany, the fatherland; I say to him, It iss there; so. You say fatherland; I, brotherland, I say, the word *father* iss that barbarism which will be first swept away; it iss the symbol of that hierarchy which hass stained the history of man with injustice of arbitrary instead of moral; force instead of love" (*CS*, 417). In a large sense, the second half of *Absalom, Absalom!* can be said to depict a struggle between the positions named in this quotation. In the sixth and seventh chapters, when Quentin and Shreve are retelling the story of Thomas Sutpen, Quentin says that Shreve "*sounds just like father*" and that "*maybe nothing ever happens once and is fin-*

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[2] Stephen M. Ross, "Oratory and the Dialogical in *Absalom, Absalom!*," *Intertextuality in Faulkner*, ed. Michel Gresset and Noel Polk (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1985), 73–86.

ished" (*AA*, 181, 261). But when they turn in the eighth chapter to telling the story of Henry Sutpen and Charles Bon, a voice clearly distinguishable from Mr. Compson's emerges. In its "protective coloring of levity" (*AA*, 280), this voice is identifiably Shreve's. But it is Quentin's as well, and Henry's, and Charles Bon's; it is the voice of the "four of them riding the two horses through the iron darkness" (*AA*, 295). Ultimately, it is even more than this, for it aspires to being the voice of "the heart and blood of youth," a voice "strong enough and willing enough for two, for two thousand, for all" (*AA*, 294).

A question posed in all but words in both *Absalom, Absalom!* and the political debates of the 1930s is whether this new voice can indeed be strong enough for all. Shreve identifies a fundamental assumption of the rhetoric of brotherhood near the beginning of the eighth chapter, when he says that because Charles Bon has no known father, he is "brothered perennial and ubiquitous everywhere under the sun" (*AA*, 299). The remainder of the chapter explores the implications of this assumption. It asks whether the story Shreve and Quentin construct asserts in some ultimate way that "your old man [is] wrong" (*AA*, 344). Can this story find in being brothered perennial and ubiquitous a source of hope and optimism rather than of sorrow and loss? Can it allow the love it takes as its theme to grow into a universal love between brothers, or must this love instead become simply another version of the son's quest for acknowledgement from an absent, withholding father?

The second context I have to offer is the agitation for educational reform associated in America with the name of John Dewey.[3] If this seems an odd context in which to view *Absalom, Absalom!*, I ask you to contemplate for a moment the importance of the theme of education in Faulkner's fiction as a whole. Scenes of instruction or attempted instruction figure prominently in *The Sound and the Fury, Light in August, The Unvanquished, Go Down, Moses,* and nearly every one of the postwar novels. From the beginning, these scenes display an interest in alternatives to traditional, authoritarian models for instruction. We are all familiar with the form this interest takes in *The Sound and the Fury.* On the one hand, we see Mrs. Compson's fatuous attempts to teach Benjy discipline and Mr. Compson's rather more successful attempts to inscribe his cynicism and despair on the mind of his eldest son. On the other hand, we see Caddy engaged in a rather different form of teaching: "'Look.' She broke the top of the water and held a piece of it against my face. 'Ice. That means how cold it is'" (*SF*, 13).

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[3] The following comments are based on a study I am just completing of Faulkner's treatment of the theme of education. The study is part of a book on patterns of continuity and change in the mature fiction.

In this example, as in Caddy's later attempt to answer Quentin's question about whether she loves Dalton Ames, we surely hear an echo of progressive education's emphasis on shared learning, on learning through the senses, and on maintaining an open, exploratory attitude toward the world. But in *The Sound and the Fury,* Caddy's mode of instruction is not really presented as a viable alternative to Mr. and Mrs. Compson's. At least Quentin, the character most in need of such an alternative, never gains access to it. His sense of the crippling potential of his father's mode of instruction produces only an inchoate act of resistance. When his father attempts to convince him that his sister "was not quite worth despair," he replies, sullenly, "nobody knows what I know" (*SF*, 178). But he never endows his way of knowing with positive content; it consists merely of knowing that he cannot afford to know in the way his father wishes him to. Hence for Quentin, education is deprived of value, and his sister's way of teaching and knowing becomes simply another icon of loss.

The point of these observations is that I wonder whether the last two chapters of *Absalom, Absalom!* should not be read as an attempt to endow Quentin's "nobody knows what I know" with positive content. As one might expect, in *The Sound and the Fury* Quentin views Harvard as an extension of his father, and he resists completely the instruction it offers. The only adult member of the Harvard community he mentions is Deacon, who teaches him a lesson in nostalgia, and the only lesson he regrets having failed to learn from his professors is the one that would help him decide how much weight to carry in his pockets while drowning himself. But in *Absalom, Absalom!,* the Harvard setting stands in opposition to Mr. Compson, not in collaboration with him. The central symbol of letter and textbook, for example, suggests an intervention of the dead hand of the past into an act of studying in which Quentin is apparently willingly engaged. More significantly, the way learning occurs in the dormitory room stands in fundamental opposition to the way it occurs in the first five chapters of the novel. Where in the one instance we see Quentin and Shreve engage in a mutual, collaborative, exploratory act of learning, whose object is to create a story about love, in the other we see a mock tutorial conducted in a graveyard, whose object is to teach Quentin how to read the traces left behind by the dead. And here, as in our first context, the question posed by the text is whether Quentin and Shreve's way of responding to the world has the power to prevail over Mr. Compson's.

The final context I have to offer is a psychoanalytic one; I wish to approach it somewhat indirectly. In the summer of 1986, I read a paper at the Oxford and Yoknapatawpha Conference in which I argued that the dramatic sections of *Requiem for a Nun* should be read as a struggle between two views of the imagination — Temple's view of it as transgres-

sive, libidinal, and memorial, and Gavin Stevens's view of it as ethical, cathartic, and future–oriented.[4] For Temple, I argued, the imagination is a way of holding on to the past and to forbidden pleasure; for Gavin Stevens, it is a way of freeing oneself from the past and of making oneself a responsible member of society. Since presenting that paper, my thinking about its topic has moved in two directions. First, I have begun to see that a concern with the relation between imagination and memory is far more pervasive in Faulkner's fiction than I had realized — that in fact the struggle between Temple Drake and Gavin Stevens is simply an explicit version of a duality that appears in several of Faulkner's novels, including *Absalom, Absalom!*. Second, I have begun to wonder whether our understanding of this duality would benefit from its being placed in a more particular historical context than the one I used in my paper on *Requiem for a Nun*. Specifically, I have begun to wonder whether Faulkner's presentation of this theme in *Absalom, Absalom!* could be illumined by reference to the debate over the duration of psychoanalytic treatment that culminated in Freud's publication in 1937 of "Analysis Terminable and Interminable."

The relevance of a psychoanalytic model to an understanding of *Absalom, Absalom!* has of course long been recognized. As Victor Strandberg observes, the structure of the novel approximates a psychoanalyst's technique; in his words, "the narrative ... probes, ... in ... stages similar to an analyst's sessions, toward understanding of a guilt too profound to be apprehended in any but piecemeal fashion."[5] Focusing on the debate over terminability can add to our understanding of this context in at least two ways. The first is that it can help us to understand the symbolism of the final chapter of the novel. By depicting a prone Quentin listening to Shreve while reliving his journey to Sutpen's Hundred, Faulkner creates an obvious parallel to the psychoanalytic situation of therapist, couch, and patient. When he adds the circumstance of Quentin's staring at the open dormitory–room window, he broaches the question at the heart of the debate over terminability. The remembered journey to Sutpen's Hundred involves movement across or through several barriers, including an open window; it culminates in a movement through "the last door" into a room that contains the core secret of the Sutpen story and of Quentin's own psychic life (*AA*, 373). For Quentin, as for the psychoanalysts, the central question is what the effect of this journey will be. Can the move-

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[4] "*Requiem for a Nun* and the Uses of the Imagination," *Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1986*, ed. Doreen Fowler and Ann J. Abadie (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1987), 272-96.

[5] Victor Strandberg, *A Faulkner Overview: Six Perspectives* (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1981), 73.

ment through the one open window result in a movement through the other? Can a journey *back* into a closed room of the psyche result in a journey *out* into a condition of wholeness and health? Or is reliving and retelling the past instead doomed to be an unending process?

The second way the debate over terminability can help us read *Absalom, Absalom!* is by reminding us of the cultural resonances of the struggle Quentin is undergoing. As Freud says, the debate over terminability "was a child of its time, conceived under the stress of the contrast between the postwar misery of Europe and the 'prosperity' of America and designed to adapt the tempo of therapy to the haste of American life."[6] In *Absalom, Absalom!*, Faulkner shifts this European–American contrast ninety degrees. The dormitory–room window, we recall, is opened by Shreve, who is the therapist figure, but who is also the northerner, the outlander, the optimist, who uses the window as the site for his deep–breathing exercises. Similarly, the spaces separated by the window are defined primarily in terms of cultural and geographical differences. The "tomblike" dormitory room is redolent with "the wistaria, the cigarsmell, the fireflies ... attenuated up from Mississippi" by Mr. Compson's letter; whereas the world outside the window is filled with "strange iron New England snow" (*AA*, 173), with New England cold, and with the sound of the college chimes, marking the passing of time. When Quentin stares at the window, then, he contemplates more than a potential transition point in his own psychic development; he contemplates a demarcation of the difference between a northern, liberal, progressive view of the life of the mind and a southern, conservative, tragic view. So a second dimension of the question he faces is whether he can move through this symbolic window as well, or whether he is fated, in Shreve's words, "to never forget ... [to enact] a kind of entailed birthright father and son and father and son of never forgiving General Sherman" (*AA*, 361).

In a sense, the questions raised by all the contexts I have mentioned are answered before the novel begins, by Faulkner's decision to use Quentin Compson as his protagonist. By choosing Quentin as protagonist, Faulkner encloses Quentin and Shreve's attempt to tell a story of brotherhood, of shared learning, and of psychic healing inside a story of despair and eventual suicide. Within *Absalom, Absalom!* proper, the questions receive a similar answer at the climactic moment of the present–time action, when the image of the dormitory–room window merges in Quentin's mind with the image of his father's letter. By placing the first half of Mr. Compson's letter at the beginning of the sixth chapter and the second half at

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[6] Sigmund Freud, "Analysis Terminable and Interminable," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey, 24 vols. (London: The Hogarth Press, 1964), 23, 209–53. The quoted passage appears on 216.

the end of the novel, Faulkner converts the letter into an enormous parenthesis that encloses Quentin and Shreve's story in a fashion similar to the way *The Sound and the Fury* encloses *Absalom, Absalom!*. Furthermore, the letter also nullifies Quentin and Shreve's story in its content, for its themes are death, repetition, and the loss of hope. "Let it be hope," Mr. Compson says, when speaking of the afterlife he envisions for Rosa Coldfield; but the hope he speaks of does not offer release from outrage and anger but instead promises their eternal continuance. The heaven he envisions is a "*place or bourne*" where Thomas Sutpen, now once again a real person, will forever be available to receive from Rosa "*the censure he no doubt deserves.*" It is little wonder, then, that at the moment of the letter's return Shreve should be speaking of how people in the south "outlive [themselves] by years and years and years" or that Quentin should reply "I am older at twenty than a lot of people who have died" (*AA*, 377).

Yet once this conclusion is stated, one begins immediately to look for ways to circumvent it. This is so not simply because the conclusion contradicts our liberal pieties but because it seems too pat, too neat for a novel as searching as *Absalom, Absalom!* In a novel that interrogates so relentlessly the terms of its own discourse, one expects that the climactic moment of closure will also be subjected to critical scrutiny. But if this scrutiny occurs, as I think it must, from what ground does it arise? For Freud, the interminability of analysis was a sign of human limitation, because he believed it to be a product of the death instinct and of the compulsion to repeat. But for later analysts, interminability is a sign of strength, not of weakness. It is a mark of the decisive break, glimpsed only imperfectly by Freud himself, that psychoanalysis effected in the history of hermeneutics.[7] I wonder if a similar observation can be made about *Absalom, Absalom!*. Is a critique of Mr. Compson's letter part of the political and cultural ambience of the novel? Or is it a latent presence that can only be seen when the novel is read in the light afforded by modern literary theory? If the answer to the second of these questions is "yes," then the phrase "contemporary history" gains an ambiguity of its own when applied to *Absalom, Absalom!*.[8]

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[7] For an illuminating commentary on this point, see Julia Kristeva, "Psychoanalysis and the Polis," trans. Margaret Walker, *The Politics of Interpretation*, ed. W.J.T. Mitchell (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 83–98.

[8] In "Opening Pandora's Box" (see footnote 1), David Krause says that the return of Mr. Compson's letter "discloses Quentin's reinscription within the texts of his past" (378); he also says that the novel "humanizes as it frees author and reader to re–write and re–read" (382). One wishes that he had explored the relation between these two assertions. How does the novel's enclosure of Quentin within the prison of his father's letter liberate author and reader? By what means are we invited to read differently from Quentin?

The Problem of Narration

Sonja Bašić (Zagreb)

Faulkner's Narrative: Between Involvement and Distancing

My approach rests on the assumption that the often paradoxical juxtaposition and merging of extreme reader involvement and extreme distancing — based on widely differing and often wildly combined narrative, stylistic, and thematic elements — is one of the most significant constitutive features of modernism as a narrative/stylistic complex to which William Faulkner preeminently, but not exclusively, belongs.[1]

In the sphere of narrative mediation, considered rather narrowly in this paper as the degree of interference between the authorial and figural perspective and voice, reader involvement will mostly result from texts which interiorize their perspective and focalize it through the character while also attempting to let us hear the character's voice and create a persuasive model of his experience. This type of narrative can be placed at the pole of the narrative continuum inhabited by the minimally mediated modes of dialogue and interior monologue.[2] Through several stages and types of mediation, narrative can be seen as reaching towards its other pole, Plato's *diegesis* or pure narrative. *Diegesis* "says less and in a more mediated way."[3] In these terms, adopted provisionally, says Genette, pure narrative can be taken to be more distant than imitation. This will also be my starting point in considering the notion of involvement and distancing in Faulkner's novels. I will discuss the movement of Faulkner's narrative, in which, as Faulkner was well aware, the "crucial distinction ... is not between telling and showing, but between different degrees and kinds of

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1 Four of my previous essays are dedicated to the project of exploring narrative and style in Joyce and Faulkner in the context of modernism: "Faulkner's Narrative Discourse: Mediation and Mimesis," *New Directions in Faulkner Studies*, ed. Ann J. Abadie and Doreen Fowler (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1984), 302–22; "Telling the Stream and Streaming the Tale (Narrative Juxtapositions and Fusions in Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*)," *Studia Romanica et Anglica Zagrebiensia*, 29/30 (1984/85), 89–103; "Transparent or Opaque? The Reader of *Ulysses* Between Involvement and Distanciation," *International Perspectives on James Joyce* (Troy, N.Y.: Whitston, 1986), 106–31; "The Narrative of Joyce's *Ulysses*: Modernist Mainstream, Postmodernist Source," to be published in the forthcoming issue of *Studia Romanica et Anglica Zagrebiensia*.

2 See Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), especially the section on mood and voice.

3 Genette, 163.

telling."[4]

The most unexpected combinations of narrative mediation are often to be found within one and the same Faulkner novel, but the distinction between various *degrees and kinds* of mediation can also be a major consideration in distinguishing between his earlier and later work. In its chronological unfolding Faulkner's *œuvre* can in fact be seen as using the types of narrative mediation arranged between the poles of Genettian *mimesis* and *diegesis*. What follows is an attempt to discuss some of Faulkner's novels in this way.

On the narrative continuum, *The Sound and the Fury* can be considered as Faulkner's modernist mimetic paradigm, followed by *Light in August* and *Absalom, Absalom!* as two extraordinary and unique narrative hybrids. In this context *Absalom, Absalom!* is a kind of climax, in which internal and external speech representation seem to mutually envelop and mirror each other. Among the later works, "Old Man" and *Intruder in the Dust* can be regarded as paradigmatic and rather simple, but again mutually distinct, examples of *diegesis*. *The Hamlet*, standing between them chronologically, is perhaps another climax, another formidable narrative hybrid, equally breathtaking as *Absalom, Absalom!*, but different. From the critical perspective assumed in this paper *The Hamlet* represents a kind of diegetic distancing which lies at the core of the narrative/stylistic complex produced by Faulkner's fiction.

Let us begin with *The Sound and the Fury* and its three interior monologues, mimetic because minimally narrated, but also because their convention presupposes the reader's ability to "authenticate" the figural voice.[5] This narrative mode can thus also be seen as subjective, offering us a psychologically founded and motivated model of consciousness. This rule has been rigorously followed by Faulkner in *The Sound and the Fury*: never for a moment can we mistake Benjy's monologue for Quentin's or either of these two for Jason's (in *Absalom, Absalom!* this rule has been greatly subverted). The fourth section of *The Sound and the Fury* is third person narration, *diegesis*. The narrator is minimally present, however: he is not omniscient, nor does he intrude in any way in the narration. It is objective non–focalized narration, heightened by Faulkner's rhetoric. Such narration is not typical in Faulkner, although it does occur intermittently in many of his works and may be considered mimetic in the wider sense — as the term is used by Erich Auerbach, for instance. This type of narrative tends to involve rather than distance as a rule.

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[4] Shlomith Rimmon–Kennan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Methuen, 1983), 108.

[5] See Lubomir Dolezel, "Truth and Authenticity in Narrative," *Poetics Today*, 1,3 (1980), 7–25.

Seen purely as a narrative structure or, more narrowly, as an exercise in narrative transmission, *The Sound and the Fury* is the purest paradigmatic example of modernist non–mediated narration in the Faulknerian canon, both in its subjective and its objective (last section) aspect.

At this point I should perhaps point out that, for the sake of theoretical clarity, I try to distinguish between narrative mediation (the presence of the narrator in the narrative transmission, either through intrusion in the story or intrusion in the discourse or by otherwise baring the devices of telling) and other forms of the narrator's (or implied author's) presence in the text, such as patterned imagery and rhythm or use of irony and parody. Stylistically, of course, Faulkner rarely allows us a moment's respite, asserting his *écriture* in every sentence. Narrationally, however, he is practically absent in *The Sound and the Fury.*

In *Light in August* the narrative complexity is much greater than in *The Sound and the Fury* and, more importantly, it is of a different order. Firstly, the role of *diegesis* is greater. Along with an uncommonly complex time–scheme, there is much multiplication and complication of the narrative focalization and transmission. Lena is presented by the narrator, but also seen by Armstid (who also transmits to us his observations of how his wife sees her) and Byron Bunch. There are authorial flashbacks concerning Percy Grimm or the Hineses and the end of the novel is told by an internal narrator, the furniture dealer, comically and a little bawdily, as he lies in bed. Moreover, the workers, the common people, are used as a kind of chorus, refracting the action through their drily humorous comments. Regardless whether or not we give this comic, communal aspect ascendancy over the tragic story of Joe Christmas flanked by Joanna and Hightower, this kind and amount of narrative mediation must be considered as an important tendency, foreshadowing Faulkner's development after *Absalom, Absalom!*.

Absalom, Absalom! recaptures the tragic urgency of *The Sound and the Fury* and, using interior monologue massively only in chapter VI, embarks on a narrative experiment much different from both *The Sound and the Fury* and *Light in August*. Two of its main narrators/characters, Quentin and Rosa, are shown as identifying with the Sutpen story to such an extraordinary degree that their first person narration about Sutpen can also be regarded as their own memory monologue. They do not, in fact, seem to have a life of their own; the Sutpens inhabit them like demons and their narratives are exorcisms. Furthermore, their telling appears to follow stylistically the uninterrupted unrolling of a thought process characteristic of the stream of consciousness. They are thus both telling their streams and streaming their tales at one and the same time. The paradoxical confusion of voices in chapter V between Rosa telling, Rosa monolo-

gizing, or both of these alternatives being streamed through Quentin's memory, brings us to the point where it becomes impossible for us to determine with any authority "who" speaks. But this is, I think, exactly the point: we are not meant to know. The origin of the narrative instance seems to be blurred on purpose, narrative authority has been withdrawn.

Such a notion of consciousness is different from Dujardin's and from that underlying *The Sound and the Fury*. Representation does not remain tied to the mimetic flow of the individual mind, geared to everyday reality as apprehended by the senses. Rather, it is an analogue, a model (which could not, however, have developed without its simpler mimetic predecessor) representing some kind of collective awareness of tragic history, transcending the personal particularity of much stream–of–consciousness fiction and becoming more impersonal. In this respect *Absalom, Absalom!* might be seen as in every way more complex and more original than *The Sound and the Fury*. Telling its stream and streaming its tale, it forces us to reconsider most of the assumptions underlying the way we "normally" read novels.

In "Old Man," which I have only separated from "Wild Palms" in order to concentrate on the ascendancy of *telling* in Faulkner's chronological development, the authorial narrator is in charge of the story from its very first parodic sentence. Juxtaposed with the experiential and internally focalized text of "Wild Palms," this is a rather simplified example of Faulkner's telling. The story consists largely of masterfully terse, ironical narration stressing physical shapes and properties with great accuracy and vividness (after inhaling the ammonia the convict's "nose now had no more feeling than a toenail, other than it felt about the size of a ten–inch shovel, and as cold", *WP*, 243).This aspect of the narrative stands midway between fable and myth on the one hand, and, on the other, a new fierce insistence on improbable but ludicrous and trivial incidents, indicating a new spirit and tone for which the earlier manner would have been inappropriate. As a result of greatly reduced internal focalization, characters in "Old Man" and *Intruder in the Dust* as well as in much of *The Hamlet* seem to lose their rich individuality, often gaining typical, even extravagant attributes noticeable from the outside: minor characters especially tend to become mannikins, clowns, one–dimensional signs.

Certainly much of the distancing is produced by Faulkner's express insistence on the act of telling in itself, which he nearly invariably subverts by the narrated text. For example, in one short sample passage (*WP*, 158–73) one encounters at least a dozen express statements that the convict is "telling." In one place we read: "This is how he told about it seven weeks later, sitting ... on his bunk in the barracks," a sentence that ends with a colon in the text, the conventional preamble to a quotation, and

then continues:

> During the next three or four hours after the thunder and lightning had spent itself the skiff ran in pitch streaming darkness upon a roiling expanse which, even if he could have seen, apparently had no boundaries. Wild and invisible, it tossed and heaved above and beneath the boat, ridged with dirty phosphorescent foam and filled with a debris of destruction... . (*WP*, 158–59)

The narrator pretends he is transmitting his authority to another, even introducing the narrative with a colon, yet he then interposes his own voice and vocabulary. Within the convention of this novel — or any novel for that matter — "this" could not be "how" the convict told the story. The author seems to be fooling, and this breaks the illusion. Hidden behind the fooling, however, there is also a serious concern with the problem of recreating reality and truth:

> He told it, the unbelievable: hurry, hasten: the man falling from a cliff being told to catch onto something and save himself; the very telling of it emerging shadowy and burlesque, ludicrous, comic and mad, from the ague of unbearable forgetting with a quality more dreamily furious than any fable behind proscenium lights: ...
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> And now he began to talk about a town, a little neat white portrait town nestling among enormous very green trees, appearing suddenly in the telling as it probably ... appeared ... in actuality, abrupt and airy and mirage–like ... (WP, 171–72)

A self–reflexive, metafictional remark if ever there was one.

Telling is thus inordinately stressed in "Old Man," both in the *discours* and in the *récit*. Most of the tall convict's adventures after his plump companion's perpendicular ascent into a tree are told by him seven weeks later, although the reader is made aware of this only after a part of the story has already been told, and without any apparent change in the style (another trick). The narrating situation is therefore somewhat similar to that of Quentin telling his story to Shreve. While in *Absalom, Absalom!*, figural narratives take (or seem to take) over, alternate, and merge, in "Old Man" the narrator proceeds unobstructed, in one consistent style, firmly in charge of the narration. Obviously here Faulkner is no longer interested primarily in the agonizing figural consciousness, or even in history. Creating a comic myth, his interest lies elsewhere: thematically, in the survival of man; formally, in a kind of private joke concerning the act of telling.

"Old Man" is a narrative about a convict narrating. It purports to quote him, but does not. It is in fact very far from Faulkner's earlier creation of figural consciousness. Not only does it fake the telling, but it also robs us of much of the figural "seeing" and, in the narrative passages, of nearly all of the figural voice — that voice which in *Light in August* so

often produced free indirect style. "Old Man" offers us in fact the very opposite of *style indirect libre*. Free indirect style, although formally narrated, minimizes the narration and allows the figural voice to alternate or merge with that of the narrator, thereby remaining mimetic to a certain degree. In "Old Man" the reader is repeatedly reminded that the convict is telling; the narration is therefore maximized, but this teller's voice is drowned as a rule under a deluge of authorial rhetoric which is superbly effective, yet completely oblivious to the previous habit of internalizing figural consciousness.

The figural narration, which in *Absalom, Absalom!* is a function of the novel's tragic theme (for Rosa and Quentin, telling means remembering or trying to recapture the past, and this for them is a matter of life and death), here appears like an empty grid, an imposition, a game. The narrative strategies contribute up to a point to reader identification, but quite as often they seem to be there on display, as arbitrary signs drawing the reader's attention away from both character and story to the problematic status of telling. In such situations one observes the narration moving away not only from interior monologues and other related variants (ranging from classical free indirect style to other types of expressive internal figural presentation, mimetic in the narrower Platonic sense) but also from the mode of more or less stylistically heightened and involving third person narrative, exemplified by Dilsey's section in *The Sound and the Fury* and by many (though not too many) passages in "Old Man" and *The Hamlet*. Innerness and psychological interest, which lead as a rule to involvement and tragedy, are replaced by the game of telling, which constructs communal rather than personal worlds and veers towards a comic vision.

This represents, then, the second, strongly mediated pole of Faulkner's narrative, occupied by the distancing teller as opposed to the involving stylist. In *Go Down, Moses*, especially when seen as one whole, or in *The Hamlet*, pre–realistic traditions of storytelling gain prominence, revived with a vengeance and mostly with a twist. The maddeningly cryptic entries in the McCaslin ledgers must be deciphered like a riddle. "Was" is full of tall–tale tricks (all of Uncle Hubert's dogs trapped in a cabin and discovered by the little black fyce) and extravagant situation comedy (the fox living in a crate under the bed). *Intruder in the Dust* owes greatly to boys' stories of the *Tom Sawyer* type and to character and situation clichés, ranging from murder mysteries to standard figures of popular literature (sheriffs with hearts of gold, surprisingly inventive old maids, etc.).

Let me consider *The Hamlet* as a representative example of this later narrative/stylistic complex. In its setting (clearly "low life"), and in some

of its segments and episodes, it can legitimately be connected to *mimesis* in both senses we have considered and to the realistic matrix. In many more of its stylistic and narrative properties it must be divorced from modern realism, which tends to suppress awareness of the narrative apparatus in the interest of illusion. In this novel, a number of legitimate strategies of realistic fiction, such as suspense, or the use of vivid, concrete detail, are drawn out or repeated until they have been made artificial, pointing back at themselves as devices. The protracted wait for an explanation of Jody's dependence on Flem turns into a parody of suspense. The shirt Flem wears during the first week of clerking at the store, so precisely rendered, clumsily stitched by hand, and yellow at the creases, is a marvelously lifelike detail. Not so at its third repetition, however, by which point it has become a bared device, out to destroy the mimetic illusion.

The primary level of every narrative is the telling *of* a story. In *The Hamlet*, however, Faulkner has also relied heavily on narration *in* the story. As Shlomith Rimmon–Kennan has pointed out,[6] this layering of stories or stratification of levels undermines the separation between narration and the story, but, more importantly for us at this point, it also undermines the illusion of the story's closeness to life. Thus in *The Hamlet* Faulkner clearly undermines realism's prime prerogatives: unity of tone and effect, and a recognizable source of narrative authority, a fair basis from which the reader can authenticate events.

The subversion derives in the first place from a most extraordinary, monstrous combination of the symbolist, poetic legacy with extreme naturalistic repulsiveness ("the son of a bitch started coming to pieces on me," says Mink) as well as more traditional realism, often marked stylistically by a kind of classical measure (e.g. Houston's life story). The narrative is furthermore constantly overlaid by strong elements of grotesquerie and hyperbole, working in several directions and achieving innovative combinations, looking forward to both Pynchon and Hawkes. Apart from milder variants (the story of Eula, which starts as a comic myth and finally modulates into a somewhat sentimental glimpse of her beautiful "doomed" face), *The Hamlet* also offers us extreme cases where we are not even expected, I think, to rely on verisimilitude: witness, for example, Lump Snopes' efforts to make Mink fish Houston's body out of its hiding place in order to rob it, and his playing a "nickel game" of checkers against Houston's fifty dollars. The latter scene may also remind us of Poe, of "King Pest," for example, and again of Pynchon.

The strongest distancing effect is achieved, however, by one particular

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6 Rimmon–Kennan, 91 and 93.

type of telling which is modeled on folk idiom and various oral and written forms of folk literature, especially as we find them juxtaposed on other narrative strategies. *The Hamlet* abounds in rather artificial and exaggerated examples of folk humor — the *hoax* of the spotted horses; Flem's *ruse*, a kind of practical joke, driving Armstid, even Ratliff, to buy the Old Frenchman's Place; the *proverb*–like, epigrammatic talk of some of the village characters; and, in a special category, the elaborate computations, *riddles*, as it were, of certain "financial" dealings. In this aspect of the novel Faulkner combines wry humor and a certain refreshing plebeian quality with an often quite maddening use of triviality or the repetition of certain leitmotifs, as fixed as Homeric epithets (Will Varner and his fat white horse, Flem and his bowtie, Ratliff and the clean faded shirt). All of these form part of a certain rhetoric of excess: every character trait or folly must be taken as far as it can go, until it reaches the extreme, be it of passion or inanity. Along with a feeling of surfeit, this also creates a sense of arbitrariness, a denial of esthetic hierarchy: a combination of mannerism and a postmodernist touch of "anything goes." In *The Hamlet* every single narrative strategy and style is subverted, by sheer multiplication and juxtaposition if by nothing else.

If *Absalom, Absalom!* can be seen as Faulkner's most original modernist landmark, *The Hamlet* is the landmark of the latter part of his career. *The Hamlet*, however, is not a step backward, towards more traditional realism. On the contrary, it brings Faulkner closer to some aspects of postmodernism: in its insistence on the process of narration, for example, on what has been called fabulation, and on the juxtaposition of vastly different narrative modes and styles, which amounts to arbitrariness, as well as in those roller–coaster plunges between the sublime and the trivial, which amount to melodrama and kitsch.

All these elements are not only formal or structural abstractions: they contribute directly to the creation of Faulkner's world and to the production of meaning in his novels. By showing that Faulkner experimented continually and obsessively with various degrees and kinds of telling, invading the story with his discourse by creating new paradoxical and hybrid types of narrative mediation, I have singled out one of his important strategies for undermining narrative authority. An awareness of this strategy should help us to understand the problematic, profoundly ironic tenor of his discourse.

Dieter Meindl (Erlangen)

Some Epistemological and Esthetic Implications of William Faulkner's Discourse

To a singular degree William Faulkner succeeded in developing a verbal medium directly expressive or transmissive of his concept of life and art. Or, more accurately, one should say that he arrived at certain epistemological and esthetic views by constantly experimenting with discourse or narrative mode.[1] To gain a perspective on the intricate question of how the texture of Faulkner's narrative speaks to the reader, suggesting views of life and art, I will focus on what I take to be one of the most dramatic artistic changes in his career.

Faulkner published two stream–of–consciousness novels in 1929–30: *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*. Both novels demonstrate his consummate artistry, and *The Sound and the Fury* provided Faulkner with an intense creative experience and apparently remained his favorite among his works throughout his life, a judgment which many critics have shared. Still, after *As I Lay Dying*, Faulkner abandoned the stream–of–consciousness novel, then as now the most noted type of modernist novel, due largely to the tremendous prestige of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. With *Light in August*, which appeared in 1932, Faulkner wrote a novel which, to its reviewer F.R. Leavis, was "more readable than the earlier books because in it Faulkner has been much less concerned to be modern in technique."[2] Two questions confront us now.

1) What may have induced Faulkner to give up the stream–of–consciousness novel? 2) Is *Light in August* more traditional than *The Sound and the Fury*?[3] We will take these up in order.

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1 On the structuralist opposition between *discours* and *histoire* (action, character constellation), see Tzvetan Todorov, "Les catégories du récit littéraire," *Communications*, 8 (1966), 125–51; see also Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978).

2 1933; reprinted in *The Merrill Studies in* Light in August, comp. M. Thomas Inge (Columbus: Charles E. Merrill, 1971), 23. I have left out of account *Sanctuary*, which appeared in 1931.Without slighting the extent and the felicity of Faulkner's revision of *Sanctuary*, it can be said that the original version of the novel, written before *As I Lay Dying*, defined its basic mode of presentation.

3 In my differentiation between the kinds of discourse employed in *The Sound and the Fury* and *Light in August* I use many ideas (while revising and rejecting others) from my *Der amerikanische Roman zwischen Naturalismus und Postmoderne 1930–1960. Eine Entwicklungs-*

Despite the terminological muddle in this particular area of narratology, there are basically only four syntactical modes of presenting thought or consciousness in fiction. Thought can be directly or indirectly reported in narrative after the pattern *he thought*: "..." or *he thought that* ...; or it can be conveyed by interior monologue or free indirect style, two modes in which the transition from external to internal perspective is provided by suggestive semantic context, the presentation of consciousness not being announced as such. James Joyce, the great virtuoso in these matters, modulates from simple third–person narrative into free indirect style and then into interior monologue in the following little passage from *Ulysses* in which Mr. Leopold Bloom leaves his house in the morning quietly because he does not want to disturb his wife, who is still in bed: "He pulled the halldoor to after him very quietly, more, till the footleaf dropped gently over the threshold, a limp lid. Looked shut. All right till I come back anyhow."[4]

"Looked shut" — short for "It looked shut" — is an example of free indirect style. Its key grammatical features are the past tense and the third person. "All right till I come back" is an example of interior monologue, its key grammatical features being the present tense and the first person. Both phrases — one directly, the other indirectly — convey *what* at that moment Bloom is thinking without announcing *that* he is thinking. Bloom thought that the door "looked shut." And then he thought: "All right till I come back anyhow."[5]

Faulkner used none of the four syntactical modes of presenting consciousness when he wrote *The Sound and the Fury*. Let us look at the famous beginning of the novel, where we have the thirty–three–year–old idiot Benjy Compson watching the golf players:

> Through the fence, between the curling flower spaces, I could see them hitting. They were coming toward where the flag was and I went along the fence. Luster was hunting in the grass by the flower tree. They took the flag out, and they were hitting. Then they put the flag back and they went to the table, and he hit and the other hit. Then they went on, and I went along the fence. Luster came away from the flower tree and we went along the fence and they stopped and we

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studie auf diskurstheoretischer Grundlage (München: Fink, 1983). I have also benefited from Kiyoyuki Ono, "Life Is Motion: An Aspect of William Faulkner's Style," *Faulkner Studies in Japan*, ed. Thomas L. McHaney (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 28–44, and from consulting again Jürgen Peper, *Bewußtseinslagen des Erzählens und erzählte Wirklichkeiten. Dargestellt an amerikanischen Romanen des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts. Insbesondere am Werk William Faulkners* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966), and André Bleikasten, *The Most Splendid Failure: Faulkner's* The Sound and the Fury (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976).

4 James Joyce, *Ulysses* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), 59.

5 This analysis is in substantial agreement with Derek Bickerton's "Modes of Interior Monologue: A Formal Definition," *Modern Language Quarterly*, 28 (1967), 229–39.

stopped and I looked through the fence while Luster was hunting in the grass. (*SF*, 1)

This is not directly or indirectly reported thought. For the fact that the whole passage occurs in Benjy's mind is not announced. Nor are we obviously confronted with free indirect style, which, incidentally, the passage becomes if one converts all the first–person forms into third–person usage. Do we then have an interior monologue? This has been claimed by critics all along. Michael Millgate says in "William Faulkner: The Problem of Point of View": "Three of the four sections of *The Sound and the Fury* take the form of interior monologues... ."[6] But if the term "interior monologue" means anything then it must mean the literary convention of direct portrayal — quotation, as it were — of a fictional character's mind, a technique which requires the use of the present tense for basic temporal orientation. As an interior monologue Benjy's thoughts on April 7, 1928, would have to run like this: "Through the fence, between the curling flower spaces, I can see them hitting. They are coming toward where the flag is and I am going along the fence..."

A slightly awkward effect, absent from the original, clings to this remodeled passage. It stems from the fact that, strictly speaking, Benjy does not proffer thought but automatic sense data which are hard to conceive as being enunciated by an interior monologue. What Faulkner actually did is something at once simple and ingenious. He employed traditional first person narrative in the past tense, of a somewhat basic variety, but of a painstaking syntactical accuracy. Approaching *The Sound and the Fury* without any fore–knowledge for the first time, the reader will inevitably at first conceive of the "I" of the Benjy section as telling a story. Only when stumbling over the italicized passages which shunt the narrative into earlier episodes of Benjy's life, will one begin to realize that the whole text does not represent a tale, but a mind. Again unlike Joyce, Faulkner never bothers at all, in the Benjy section, to dissolve the syntax of his sentences for suggesting the fluid, continuous nature of human consciousness. This means that the term "stream of consciousness" is not strictly applicable at all in terms of discourse but only in terms of structure.

The decisive linguistic feature about *The Sound and the Fury* is the use of the past tense for Benjy's, Quentin's and Jason's experiences on April 7, 1928, June 2, 1910, and April 6, 1928 respectively. These are the days, stipulated by the section headings, on which their minds are presumably shown in action. Inasmuch as these minds are saturated with flashbacks to

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[6] *Patterns of Commitment in American Literature*, ed. Marston LaFrance (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 181–92; cited in *The Merrill Studies in* The Sound and the Fury, comp. James B. Meriwether (Columbus: Charles E. Merrill, 1970), 125.

earlier events, the use of the past tense is in order. But one would expect the use of the present tense for conveying registration by the mind of its immediate outside context. Faulkner opted for the past tense. It is a baffling narrative strategy, which, however, works beautifully for the reader. The question is then: When do Benjy's and Quentin's and Jason's monologues occur?

In the very last sentence of the Benjy section his mind erupts into the present. Logically this should be some late hour of April 7, 1928, when Benjy looks back on a jumbled version of his life made up of bits and pieces of episodes having taken place on that very day and earlier. But, in point of fact, Benjy's present, of which there seem to be only three instances in the whole section (*SF*, 6, 12, 75), sends us back to a time when his sister Caddy was still with him. Thus, in a sense, he has never lost her. The section ends with the Compson children going to bed:

> Caddy held me and I could hear us all, and the darkness, and something I could smell. And then I could see the window, where the trees were buzzing. Then the dark began to go in smooth, bright shapes, like it always *does*, even when Caddy *says* that I have been asleep. (*SF*, 92; my emphasis)

Ultimately, Benjy's whole experience, as presented in the first section of *The Sound and the Fury*, cannot be situated in calendar and clock time. We might conceive of Benjy's mind–narrative rather as a floating moment in time, infused with Benjy's whole existence and having the nature of a dream. Faulkner himself said: "To that idiot, time was not a continuation, it was an instant, there was no yesterday and no tomorrow, it all is in this moment, it all is [now] to him. He cannot distinguish between what was last year and what will be tomorrow, he doesn't know whether he dreamed it, or saw it" (*LG*, 147f.). This is equivalent to saying that, as early as his stream–of–consciousness novel *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner tried, through a defective mind, to approximate his basic, existential concept of time, according to which "There is no such thing as *was* — only *is*" (*LG*, 255).[7] Benjy's time, however, lacks existential continuity. It is disjointed, splintered, in fragments rather than in flux.

We will not be luckier in trying to establish when Quentin's stream of consciousness occurs. Quentin never abandons the past tense in conveying the events of June 2, 1910, the last day of his life. The section ends, still in the past tense, with Quentin's neurotically meticulous toilet at nightfall, which precedes his departure to drown himself in the Charles River. In trying to locate Quentin's mind–narrative in time, one's best guess would be the instant of his death, when the drowning man's life flashed

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[7] See also *LG*, 70: "There is only the present moment, in which I include both the past and the future, and that is eternity."

before his eyes — a life fully in the past.

As for Jason's monologue, critics have always been uneasy about calling it an interior monologue. Robert Humphrey, in *Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel* (1955), called Jason's furious tirade a "soliloquy on a surface, communicating level," and Michael Millgate concedes that "it is easy to imagine Jason's words as being spoken aloud."[8] Imagining Jason's words being spoken aloud, however, entails imagining him actually talking about his neurotic prying into his niece's sex life and his habit of swindling her out of her money.

Generally speaking, Faulkner's technique in the stream–of–consciousness novel *The Sound and the Fury* is indicative of impatience with the limited and limiting point of view of the individual mind — indicative of a wish to get out of ordinary human consciousness altogether, which, in a sense, is what Faulkner did when he added the fourth section, which is told in the third person, from an intermittently omniscient point of view. Briefly put, what Faulkner does in *The Sound and the Fury* is have an idiot incapable of speech, a drowned or drowning man and an undetected criminal tell their life tales. By structural rather than discursive means he permits the reader to conceive of these tales as the courses run by three minds — presumably on three particular days which serve as reference points in time *for the reader*, but which accommodate these mind–functions only with difficulty, if at all. As I see it, Faulkner used the paradoxical perspective of death in order to be all inclusive. To see one's life whole one has to be dead, or, at least, psychologically dead, in the grip of a fixation precluding any change. Faulkner had experimented with *post–mortem* perspectives before, in his poetry[9] and novels about "all the dead pilots," psychically damaged returned World War I aviators, and was to do so again with Addie Bundren's monologue in *As I Lay Dying*, a novel which basically reverts to traditional stream of consciousness keyed to the use of the present tense. With all of these Faulknerian figures, everything that can happen to them in their lives already has happened, which is also the condition of the Compson brothers, transfixed as they are in their want or claim or hate of their absent sister Caddie. To have the Compson brothers present themselves wholly, as actions of their minds, was to show that they were dead, that their lives had stopped before ending — hence it made sense to deny their mind–functions locations in datable time. What we have then in *The Sound and the Fury* is a late and advanced example of the modernist stream-of-consciousness novel, in which the mi-

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[8] (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955), 109; Millgate, "William Faulkner," in *The Merrill Studies in* The Sound and the Fury, 129.

[9] See especially poem I in *A Green Bough* (1933), a book whose content dates from the early 1920s.

metic and quasi–realistic attempt to approximate human consciousness as such with language has been all but abandoned. *The Sound and the Fury* leans toward a constructivist approach relying on the reader's willingness and capacity to observe certain structural signals. In the final analysis, Faulkner painted powerful portraits of individuals in diametrical opposition to his own definition of man, pronounced 30 years later: "Man as a part of life" (*FU*, 5).[10]

The Sound and the Fury, masterpiece that it is, represents a "splendid failure" in terms of the larger ambitions Faulkner had begun to nourish. As we know from statement after statement made in the 1950s, he came to conceive of reality, or rather life, as he significantly preferred to call it, as motion: "The aim of every artist is to arrest motion, which is life, by artificial means and hold it fixed ..." (*LG*, 253); and: "...time is not a fixed condition, time is in a way the sum of the combined intelligences of all men who breathe at that moment" (*FU*, 139); and: "... 'living' is motion, and 'motion' is change and alteration and therefore the only alternative to motion is un–motion, stasis, death ..."[11]

Given Faulkner's desire to convey the totality of life and time, the stream-of-consciousness novel, which inevitably translates individual minds, must eventually have proved counter–productive. *The Sound and the Fury* already stretches the definition of the type. But finished and complete as the mind–narratives of Benjy, Quentin and Jason Compson are, these *post–mortem*, first–person narratives remain the past lives of Benjy, Quentin and Jason Compson. Quentin in particular, with his psychological malaise fully defined by the Compson family disorder, is hardly the Quentin of *Absalom, Absalom!*, whose "very body was an empty hall echoing with sonorous defeated names," who "was not a being, an entity, he was a commonwealth" (*AA*, 12). It is important to note that in *Absalom, Absalom!* Quentin's body, not his mind, is called the receptacle of the history of his land and, by extension, of all life that has gone before him. In probing beneath the stream of consciousness, Faulkner did not come upon the unconscious which, in the Freudian conception at least, is the concealed part of the individual psyche, but touched upon a level of general being in man: man as a part of the stream or flow of life.

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[10] That stream of consciousness, one of the hallmarks of modernism, owes itself to an imitative, realistic impulse is convincingly demonstrated by Sonja Bašić in "Faulkner's Narrative Discourse: Mediation and Mimesis" (*New Directions in Faulkner Studies*, ed. Doreen Fowler and Ann J. Abadie [Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1984], 302–21; esp. 305–8). I totally disagree with her equation of the narrative technique of *The Sound and the Fury* with that of the first chapters of *Ulysses*, however.

[11] Prefatory note to *The Mansion*. We may mark *en passant* the implicit equation of art and death as both being opposed to life, which reminds one of Jacques Derrida's view of writing: "Tout graphème est d'essence testamentaire" (*De la grammatologie* [Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1967], 100).

The task of transcending individual perspective and stream of consciousness to render a sense of life in general posed formidable artistic problems. In a very precise sense it pitted Faulkner against the barrier of language. Language as an existential phenomenon, that is speech, *parole*, spoken or written or otherwise signified, occurs only in individual enactments, as does its correlate, human consciousness. Faulkner, wishing to present the general existential motion of life, thus not only had to abandon the stream-of-consciousness novel which hinges upon the presentation of individual acts of consciousness, but had to suggest by some means a dimension beyond words, a realm of not–language, with language.

This artistic problem can also be represented as an epistemological problem. The self, as we know, constitutes itself as the polar opposite or absolute other of the world, this procedure being the *sine qua non* of cognition and the basis of the concept of a perceiving subject and a perceived object. Consciousness is dependent upon this separation or confrontation within itself: the clearer my conception of the world as an object, the more distinct my self–awareness as a thinking subject. The subject–object matrix is imprinted on language as every narrative demonstrates: whatever is narrated is narrated from a certain point of view, with a certain attitude, even if it be called "objective." Western culture by and large functions by the dualism of Descartes which separates mind from matter, thinking subject from object of thought. Faulkner, however, in seeking to present life as motion, achieved an alliance with a line of existential thinking which sees the continuous, temporal dimension of life in its totality as prior to, and underlying, as it were, individual consciousness and cognition. This is the line of thinking which runs from Schopenhauer to Nietzsche and Bergson to Heidegger and Whitehead. Of these philosophers Bergson is the only one, however, whose influence Faulkner can be shown to have felt.[12]

Individual consciousness, language, and the subject–object matrix are the conceptual correlates which stood in Faulkner's way when his artistic vision went beyond the stream-of-consciousness novel to what, for want of a better term, we might call the "novel of the stream of life." His doubts about language seem to have originated earlier, however: in a youthful sense of estrangement from life which proved amenable to transformation into an esthetic concept of necessary failure before "the whole

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[12] See *LG*, 70, 72. Also Joseph Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography*, 2 vols. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1974), 1219, 1302, 1441. Faulkner's affinity with the mentioned thinkers, in particular Alfred North Whitehead, figures in my "Hemingway and Faulkner: Companions in Modernism," *Mythos und Aufklärung in der amerikanischen Literatur/ Myth and Enlightenment in American Literature*, ed. Dieter Meindl and Friedrich W. Horlacher (Erlangen: Universitätsbund, 1985), 375–98, esp. 391–93.

complete nuance of the moment's experience, of all the recaptured light rays" (*LG*, 107). Paradoxically, Faulkner's rhetoric flowered as his engagement with a transindividual and preverbal dimension deepened.[13]

Faulkner set out to give shape to his expanding vision with a mode of discourse shaped by two contradictory impulses which make themselves felt with varying emphasis, and which sometimes achieve a sort of balance. The impulses are those toward stasis and motion. Reading *Light in August*, we come upon passages which rhythmically imitate and semantically suggest the motion of life itself. For example, in the first chapter, we have Lena Grove passing Winterbottom's stable: "She went out of sight up the road: swollen, slow, deliberate, unhurried and tireless as augmenting afternoon itself. She walked out of their talking; perhaps out of their minds too" (*LA*, 7).

This is an example, a rather tame one at that, of what Warren Beck called Faulkner's "richly interpretative style."[14] Here we have language representing a continuum, with series of epithets and dependent clauses and discrete sentences successively qualifying one another and subordinating both abstract definitions and figurative expressions to a hypnotic and dreamlike effect. It is a mode of discourse which strikes one as the counterpoint of rational argument, as a linguistic medium which is not particularly susceptible of visualization, but eminently suited to evoke elemental moods and an atmosphere of primal being. Yet, the movement suggested by the quoted passage can also be apprehended as slowed and almost arrested by its analytic insistence on various impressions, by its descriptive superabundance, which, as it were, detains Lena as she disappears. In another passage constructed on exactly the same rhetorical principle of endless accumulation and qualification the sense of stasis seems to take over completely. In this case an abandoned saw–mill is described:

> gaunt, staring, motionless wheels rising from mounds of brick rubble and ragged weeds with a quality profoundly astonishing, and gutted boilers lifting their rusting and unsmoking stacks with an air stubborn, baffled and bemused upon a stumppocked scene of profound and peaceful desolation, unplowed, un-

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[13] Lack of confidence in verbalization also afflicted the greatest rhetorician of the American novel in the 19th century, Herman Melville, who came to doubt increasingly the suitability of language as a medium for arriving at a metaphysical truth. A statement by Melville — "God keep me from ever completing anything" (quoted in *New Perspectives on Melville*, ed. Faith Pullin [Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1978], xi) — could easily have been made by Faulkner, who in fact said: "I don't think any author can be satisfied with his work. If he were, there'd be nothing left for him to do but cut his throat" (*LG*, 220). Faulkner must have felt a great affinity for Melville, calling *Moby–Dick* the best American novel and one of his favorites, in which he said he read regularly (*FU*, 15, 20; *LG*, 17, 21, 48, 60, 110, 217).

[14] "William Faulkner's Style" [1941], reprinted in *William Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism*, ed. Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery (East Lansing: Michigan State College Press, 1951), 155.

> tilled, gutting slowly into red and choked ravines beneath the long quiet rains of autumn and the galloping fury of vernal equinoxes. (*LA*, 2)

And yet the contrary impulse toward motion is at work here, too, not only in the subjection of mortar and metal to seasonal erosion, but in the uncanny, animistic description of inorganic matter.

I propose the following model for elucidation of this rhetorical mode. In the first place, the evocation of the dynamic dimension which is life depends upon the use of third–person narrative to which Faulkner returned after his stream–of–consciousness interlude. Faulkner's new rhetoric makes use of the anonymity of the third person. For it is quite clear that life — life seen as general, preverbal and not yet ruled by the subject–object matrix of individual consciousness — cannot be easily suggested by a figural point of view, be it that of first–person narrative or that of interior monologue. And yet, looking at the quoted passages again, we do notice an element of subjectivity, of figural perspective. "She," that is, Lena, "walked out of their talking; perhaps out of their minds too." By means of a simple adverb — *perhaps* — third–person narration here relinquishes its traditional privilege of omniscience, of simply stating and presenting character consciousness. *Light in August* abounds in such conjectural passages about character consciousness. They are indicative of a tendency to endow the narrative voice with the accents of an observer of the scene, a kind of generalized inhabitant and superconsciousness of Yoknapatawpha. This incipient assimilation of auctorial to a sort of subliminal figural perspective is also implied in the impressionistic animism of our second passage. Thus, the 1930s saw the blooming of Faulkner's typical style, a flexible medium which is put to an essentially twofold use. In its auctorial anonymity it can encompass the motion which is life in general. And in its alliance with figural perspective it can convey an *experience* of the existential dimension at that very level where the inception of consciousness tends to arrest the motion and continuity of life. This accounts for the frequency in Faulkner's work, from *Light in August* onwards, of "frozen images," as they are often called, or mute tableaux in which sometimes very violent movement is intercepted, slowed or otherwise tinged with stasis.

A particularly impressive example of static imagery contravening the Faulknerian rhetorical continuum occurs near the beginning of *Light in August*. It is the description of Armstid's mule–drawn wagon:

> Though the mules plod in a steady and unflagging hypnosis, the vehicle does not seem to progress. It seems to hang suspended in the middle distance forever and forever, so infinitesimal is its progress, like a shabby bead upon the mild red string of road. So much is this so that in the watching of it the eye loses it as sight and sense drowsily merge and blend, like the road itself, with all the

> peaceful and monotonous changes between darkness and day, like already measured thread being rewound onto a spool. So that at last, as though out of some trivial and unimportant region beyond even distance, the sound of it seems to come slow and terrific and without meaning, as though it were a ghost travelling a half mile ahead of its own shape. "That far within my hearing before my seeing," Lena thinks. (*LA*, 5–6)

There is not sufficient space for a thorough–going analysis of this hallucinatory passage, nor of Lena's ensuing "thoughts": a veritable disquisition on the relativity and malleability of time. Suffice it to say that we have here both motion and stasis. The perceiving subject — "sight and sense" — and the perceived object — the road scene — blend with the changes of the day, the motion of life and time. This state of the annulment of the individual is apparently canceled by the onset of the hearing sense which inevitably functions in measurable time, which is a rational abstract. The whole passage is associated with Lena's field of vision and earshot, but like her ensuing reflections totally out of character, an infringement of the narrative principle of decorum in view of her ordinary vernacular mode of speech. The antimimetic trend already observable in Faulkner's stream–of–consciousness novel *The Sound and the Fury* is intensified. But the very fact that Lena could never articulate sensations of this order marks them as derived from a more general level of life. It should be added that in *Light in August* and *Absalom, Absalom!* such descents toward existential motion are strictly functional in providing a sort of purchase, a meaning–defying, elemental platform, as it were, from which the heights — all the more elevated by contradistinction — of the tragic concepts of these novels must be scaled.

Faulkner's interceptions of existential motion represent life stilled by art. As such they signify and symbolize the artistic agency in the novel. But in their apprehension as incipient states of consciousness by the reader they also confirm the antirationalist tendency in modernism, its yearning for the primal.

Stephen Ross (Annapolis)

"Lying Beneath Speech": Preliminary Notes on the Representation of Thought in "Carcassonne"

I wish to propose here some preliminary, but I hope systematic and descriptive notes on the representation of thought in Faulkner's fiction. Why I say "preliminary" will be obvious from the incompleteness of my discussions, and my reliance for illustrations on one short text, the story "Carcassonne" (*CS*, 895-900). I say "systematic" because the procedures I describe could be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to the representation of thought in any author's fiction.

All of Faulkner's typical discursive modes of representing thought appear in "Carcassonne," in concise form. Written early in his career, probably in 1925 or 1926,[1] "Carcassonne" is certainly one of the odder stories in Faulkner's *œuvre*, unusual in its brevity, its lack of plot, its abstraction. Faulkner admired the story for its fantastic and poetic qualities (*FU*, 22), and he concluded both *These Thirteen* and *Collected Stories* with it, as if he had written it for the purpose of illustrating some fundamental version of the inner life as he conceived it. Michel Gresset[2] and David Minter[3] rightly see the story as possessing special biographical interest in that it expresses the still unfulfilled hopes of the young artist: "*I want to perform something bold and tragical and austere*" (*CS*, 899), though whether we can discover in "Carcassonne," as Michael Grimwood does,[4] images of binding and suckling in direct unconscious response to Faulkner's mother and her constraints on his creativity, I am not sure. In any case, its "psychic" importance is crucial. For Cleanth Brooks[5] and others[6] "Carcassonne" celebrates the power of the imagination in conflict with mere physical existence. Noel Polk, however, finds in it less a celebration

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1 Joseph Blotner, *Faulkner. A Biography*. 2 vols. (New York: Random House, 1974), 502.

2 *Faulkner ou la fascination: Poétique du regard* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1982), 20.

3 *William Faulkner. His Life and Work* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 61–62.

4 *Heart in Conflict: Faulkner's Struggles with Vocation* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987), 46–51.

5 *Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978).

6 See Richard A. Milum, "Faulkner's 'Carcassonne': The Dream and the Reality," *Studies in Short Fiction*, 15 (1978), 133–38; Robert W. Hamblin, "'Carcassonne': Faulkner's Allegory of Art and the Artist," *Southern Review*, 15 (1979), 355–65.

than a cry of despair, arguing that the imagery, derived from such sources as Eliot's *The Waste Land*, along with the story's climactic position in *These Thirteen* place "Carcassonne" squarely among Faulkner's early depictions of post–World–War–I alienation.[7]

"Carcassonne" can serve to exemplify the multiplicity of discursive features that cause readers to regard certain portions of the fictional discourse as thought — that is, as in some way issuing from, occurring in, or verbalized by a given character's consciousness, but not communicated to anyone outside the privacy of that character's mind. (When communicated, "thought" becomes speech, or gesture, or writing.) Although I am mostly concerned here with verbalized thought, the consciousness in its broadest sense embraces a range of phenomena from conscious and deliberate formulation of discourse in the silence of the mind (as when the protagonist of "Carcassonne" "shap[ed] his lips soundlessly in the darkness [and said] 'I would like to perform something'" [*CS*, 898]) to automatic, uncontrolled and (originally) non–verbal perceptions and sensations (as when the protagonist "tingled a little pleasantly ... as he lay beneath the tarred paper bedclothing" [*CS*, 895]). Four procedures govern the conventional verbal transformations resulting in represented thought, procedures that appear in any rendition of thought to greater or lesser degree. Represented thought is in this sense "a function of" four discursive practices: a meditative–narrative function, a dialogical function, a psychoanalytical function, and an expressive function.

The first practice in the representation of thought is what I am calling the *meditative–narrative* function, that is, the evocation of a meditative scene and act: thought is a function of the narrated circumstance in which it occurs, the set of described conditions under which the act of thinking can be imagined as taking place, the conditions under which the presence, implied or actual, of a persona's consciousness is opened to the reader. A minimal meditative condition can be fulfilled merely by such identifying tags as "he thought," or "he mused" — the internal equivalent of speech tags like "he said."[8] At the opposite extreme from such tags are elaborated

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[7] Noel Polk, "William Faulkner's 'Carcassonne,'" *Studies in American Ficton*, 12 (1984), 29–43.

[8] Grammatically, speech tags and "thought" tags can be treated as equivalent except for the occurrence of audible speech. Most theorists include verbal thought in their discussions for just this reason, though such parallels can be misleading. See, for example, Derek Bickerton's claim that "inner speech can only be rendered by one of the methods used for rendering spoken speech" ("Modes of Interior Monologue: A Formal Definition," *Modern Language Quarterly*, 28, 1967, 229–39; 238). See also Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 10–11, and Ann Banfield, *Unspeakable Sentences: Narration and Representation in the Language of Fiction* (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), 35–36.

meditative scenes in which a thinking character is positioned, as it were, *vis à vis* the discourse of his or her mind. It is here we can often discover those ways in which thought comes to be instituted in the world, those boundaries where the objective and subjective meet, those stances the meditating subject assumes in relation to the world and in relation to his or her own psychic discourse.

In Faulkner meditation evinces a consistency well illustrated in "Carcassonne." This story depicts, we might say, the quintessential Faulknerian contemplative moment: a man lies beneath a roof waiting for sleep or death. "Carcassonne" opens *in media cogitatione* with italicized lines projected onto the screen of the protagonist's mind. The protagonist lies "beneath an unrolled strip of tarred roofing made of paper" under a "ceiling of [a] garret [that] slanted in a ruined pitch to the low eaves ... groined with ribs of dying sunlight" (*CS*, 895, 896, 899). Meditating and imagining, yet aware of his body and of his environment, the protagonist "speaks" his mind, dreaming of performing something "*bold and tragical and austere*," though he does not know what. He muses and speculates, playing with various metaphors (the roll of tar paper is like "those glasses, reading glasses which old ladies used to wear"), conjuring up allusions to unidentified histories ("that riderless Norman steed which galloped against the Saracen Emir"), commenting on an apparent patron "Mrs. Widdrington" who "owns" him and "the rats too," debating with his skeleton about "the end of life" which "is lying still." At the story's end we are not sure what has happened, for the protagonist merely reiterates his opening dream image of a "*buckskin pony with eyes like blue electricity*." Whether he has died, or fallen asleep, or achieved some epiphany is not certain, though the wasteland imagery as well as the final image of "Earth ... deepbreasted and grave of flank" do suggest death.[9]

The most important meditative moments in Faulkner's fiction show remarkable similarities to that in "Carcassonne." Narrated meditation usually occurs while a character drifts into sleep or death, often lying down, and seeking some insight that until at least the final moments of thinking, and sometimes forever, eludes him. Commonly a character lies beneath a roof, hearing rain, and "thinking." Young Bayard Sartoris lies in the dark silence at the MacCallum farm the night after his driving has killed his grandfather. He relives his brother's death, and yearns for the peace that "comes to all" but not to him. He hears rain on the roof, and while this permits sleep, it offers only momentary comfort: "It comes to

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[9] Noel Polk insists that the dreamer is on the verge of death, that he "is himself physically dead, or on the point of dying" or "in an artistically arrested moment right in the crack between living and dying" (Polk, 38). Others see him as merely falling asleep, yearning as he does for some apotheosis of the imagination (Brooks, Hamblin, and Milum).

all, it comes to all, his tired heart comforted him, and at last he slept" (*FD*, 317). Darl Bundren tries to "empty" himself for sleep in a strange room by meditating on *is* and *was*, and on "how often have I lain beneath rain on a strange roof, thinking of home" (*AILD*, 76).[10] Again and again this kind of moment serves as Faulkner's typical narration of significant thought. Hightower meditates in his window at twilight before his final vision of his grandfather's ride through Jefferson; the Confederate officer Weddel in "Mountain Victory" lies "in the dark, thinking of home" the night before his death (*CS*, 766); Ike McCaslin lies in his tent in "Delta Autumn," reviewing his reasons for repudiating the land that was to be his heritage; Mink Snopes lies down for a last time, chancing the pull of the earth one more time, after he has killed Flem at the close of *The Mansion*. Horace Benbow imagines such a scene of meditation as a relief: after he hears Temple Drake's hideous story of her rape, he is overwhelmed by a sense of the world's evil and yearns for "a gentle dark wind blowing in the long corridors of sleep: of lying beneath a low cozy roof under the long sound of the rain" (*S*, 214).

"Carcassonne" also illustrates a second trait typical of Faulkner's meditative scenes: thought's movement from frustration and blockage toward release and revelation. As a character moves into sleep or death, he usually wrestles with some idea or insight that just eludes him, some special awareness that might explain suffering or bring comfort. The poet–protagonist muses on doing something "bold and tragical and austere" — but what that is eludes him. The story ends with a final release of his imagined "buckskin pony" soaring off into the imagined sky, free forever of the earth. Wilbourne in *The Wild Palms* hovers a number of times on the edge of understanding ("That was the second time he almost got it. But it escaped him again" [*WP*, 316]), only to have the final insight come as "no flash of comprehension" but "just a simple falling of a jumbled pattern" (*WP*, 323). Wash Jones (in "Wash") thinks in this manner after he kills Sutpen:

> ... thinking went slowly and terrifically, fumbling, involved somehow with a sound of galloping hooves, until there broke suddenly free in mid–gallop the fine proud figure of the man on the fine proud stallion, galloping; and then that at which thinking fumbled, broke free too and quite clear, not in justification nor even explanation, but as the apotheosis, lonely, explicable, beyond all fouling by human touch ... . (*CS*, 542)

Such common imagery of "breaking free" takes varied form throughout Faulkner, most famously in chapter 20 of *Light in August*, where the

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[10] Appropriate sounds can substitute for the sound of rain, such as the patterings of rat's feet in "Carcassonne," or the palm trees "murmuring beyond the bars" outside Harry Wilbourne's jail cell (*WP*, 322).

"wheel" of thought, "released, seems to rush on with a long sighing sound" toward Hightower's epiphany and perhaps death (*LA*, 465).[11]

The second discursive practice governing the representation of thought is what I am calling the *dialogical* function: by this I mean the extent to which, and the manner in which, thinking takes on the necessities of dialogue — its spirit if not its form. The dialogical is the degree to which the discourse marks for us the presence of other voices, the covert or overt discourse of an Other or of the self as "Other." Included here would be the self–reflexive awareness the thinking subject possesses that he or she is thinking, the ways in which thought is itself thought about. Features of the discourse split thought into varying voices (as when a thinker "thinks" the words of another) and indicate how aware the meditating character is of what "is happening" in his consciousness. Especially important here is the act of responding to and answering one's own thoughts or another's thoughts in one's own mind.

"Carcassonne" fulfills the dialogical function in its explicit projection of the protagonist's verbal thoughts in the form of a dialogue between the protagonist's imaginative self and "his skeleton" (the "immortal part" in A. E. Housman's poem which Faulkner had in mind[12]). The skeleton overtly speaks to the musing man, in conversational, mimetically voiced form:

> "All you know is what I tell you," he said.
>
> "Not always," the skeleton said. "I know that the end of life is lying still. You haven't learned that yet. Or you haven't mentioned it to me, anyway."
>
> "Oh, I've learned it," he said. (*CS*, 899)

Some such splitting of the individual psyche occurs in most of Faulkner's meditative scenes. Rarely does a character think monologically, in continuous stream–of–consciousness manner, but rather as Plato described thought, in an "unuttered conversation of the soul with herself."[13] In *Absalom, Absalom!* "two separate Quentins [talk] to one another in the long silence of notpeople, notlanguage," and what follows is a self–interrupting dialogue between the "two" Quentins (*AA*, 9). Thought answers thought, skeleton speaks to soul, soul to "body consciousness" ("Carcassonne," *CS*, 890), the "top of his mind" to the deeper parts, the intelligence to emotions ("The Brooch," *CS*, 654), the conscience ("the grim Moses") to desire (*WP*, 35), "believing" to "knowing" (*LA*, 111).

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[11] This movement characterizes even narrated consciousness that does not entail verbalization. When Joe Christmas imagines the cracked urns that symbolize his discovery of "womanfilth," or when Horace Benbow imagines Little Belle on the bed of corn shucks, both are sickened and both vomit, a physical expurgation of their imagining.

[12] Brooks, 61–62.

[13] Plato, *Sophist*, 274, 263.

Faulkner objectifies in this way the "other" with which the "I" of a thinking character always communicates. Not merely a convenience of form, this doubling of internal voices reflects in Faulkner the same belief in the inherently dialogical nature of human consciousness that Bakhtin attributes to Dostoevsky: "The very being of man (both external and internal) is the *deepest communion. To be* means to communicate."[14] For both writers consciousness is never singular, never "in the form of a sole and single *I*," though Faulkner conceived, I would argue, of an internal communication wherein the other's voice is not necessarily "socially alien" (Bakhtin's phrase) as it is in Dostoevsky, so much as it is an embodied "other of the self" (to borrow still another phrase from Bakhtin). "Carcassonne" emphasizes the dialogical quality of consciousness through images of doubling that cleave the objects of thought, as well as the mind's discourse, into symbolic dualities. The protagonist "thought of the Norman steed ... thundering along in two halves and not knowing it." In the story's final image the imagined "buckskin pony" leaves the earth as a "dying star upon the immensity of darkness" rising in apotheosis above "the dark and tragic figure of the Earth, his mother" (*CS*, 898; 900).

I admit to having no satisfactory name for the third discursive practice that conventionally governs the representation of thought; one might call it the *psychoanalytical* function, for it is based on the Freudian metaphor of "depth," though I think "spatialization" would perhaps be the more lucid term. It entails the notion that human consciousness varies in accord with degrees of control over and awareness of psychic content, control that is expressed in a spatial metaphor of depth. Some thoughts we write legibly on the "surface" of our awareness while other "thoughts" ooze from those "depths" of our being to which we have little voluntary access. The representation of thought is a function of the presumed entry into the "interior" (all our language here is metaphorical) of a persona's psyche, and of the placement or *positioning* of the psyche's discourse within consciousness. Features of the discourse indicate how deeply we have plunged into a character's mind, and concomitantly, how much control the thinker can exercise over the act and content of his or her thoughts. The degree and form of *logic* is important here as well, as differing depths of the mind conventionally employ differing logical syntax — cause–and–effect, for example, as differentiated from associative logic. While the notion of "control" is perhaps more empirically accurate as a figure for the psyche's activity than is the spatial metaphor of depth or levels, the figure has considerable explanatory power, and seems conventionally employed or implied in nearly all fictive representations of consciousness.

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[14] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 287.

A stratification or layering of consciousness typifies Faulkner's particular version of the spatialized psyche: in the Faulknerian geology of the mind, consciousness leaves its sediments at varied depths, each distinct from the other. Typeface, syntax, imagery, vocabulary — many features of discourse reveal the psyche's differing levels, from the superficial awareness ("the top of his head") to deeper, more disjointed and perhaps unsayable musings. The formal markings of thought imply different levels and concomitantly different degrees of conscious control or deliberate verbalization. Thus in "Carcassonne" the quoted yet soundless thought "I would like to perform something" presumably emanates from a different stratum than does the italicized "*I want to perform something bold and tragical and austere*," even though the wording is essentially the same. *Light in August* employs the most consistent and extended formal system of layered consciousness, with its use of double quotes, single quotes, and italics — as François Pitavy has discussed.[15] Some texts define the layers by verbal context as well as by formal markers: in "Carcassonne" the protagonist expresses what I think are his "deeper" emotions in a discourse filled with allusions to modern poetry — Housman and Eliot, especially. *The Sound and the Fury* signals the deeper levels of Jason's or Quentin's psyches by increasingly frequent echoes of others' voices within their memories. Faulknerian representation of thought is usually highly intertextual, infusing one character's verbalizable thought with others' discourse or with other texts.

The fourth procedure of representing thought I label the *expressive* function. The expressive is constituted by a double discursive maneuver. Partly it is the tendency to represent thought as speech, to put into verbal speech–like form the "content" of consciousness, the creation of the mind's *discourse*; partly, however, the expressive function is an almost contradictory attempt to transcend the expressive limitations of *mere* speech, to introduce powers of expression not available to spoken discourse. This double gesture of expression through speech and expression beyond speech touches upon the complex relation between speech and thought. Many psychic "events" are themselves verbal in nature, but many — images, sensations, intense emotions — are arguably not verbal. A "thought act" does not presume a prior verbal act, as does a reported "speech act." Yet in fiction (and, many have argued, in all intersubjective life[16]) even non–verbal mental phenomena must be transmuted into the verbal.

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[15] *Faulkner's* Light in August, trans. Gillian E. Cook (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973).

[16] Merleau–Ponty puts it that way: "We live in a world where the spoken word is *instituted* .... The linguistic and intersubjective world does not surprise us, we no longer distinguish it

The expressive function, then, embraces all those modes of delimiting given portions of the text's discourse as being "thought," as being internal to consciousness, all those methods of marking discourse as thought, such as the tag "he thought." Thought's verbalization, of course, raises questions of direct vs. indirect representation, parallel with such issues in the representation of speech. Thought can be reported; thought can be quoted; thought can be freely expressed in modes that range between these extremes (as a character's speech can be embodied in free indirect discourse). Characteristic of Faulkner's fulfillment of the first aspect of expression — the verbalizing of thought as speech — is his disruption of clear boundaries between "internal" and "external" verbal realms, his apparent desire to inject consciousness into the world and the world into consciousness. The speech of the mind and the speech of the world notoriously intermingle in Faulkner. There is often some ambiguity how to "assign" the words that represent thought: do they belong to the authorial diegetic discourse, as "reporter" of thought? Are they freely adapted versions of a discourse belonging to the thinker? Are they quotations of "internal" verbalization?[17]

This kind of analysis is familiar, of course, to studies of *style indirect libre* or *Erlebte Rede*. Faulkner uses the tools of direct, indirect, and free indirect discourse to allow thought in "Carcassonne" to range from diegetic report to directly quoted silent speech:

> *Report of sensation*: "He could see the shadowgirth ..." (*CS*, 898).
> *Report of act of thinking*: "He mused for a time, while the beast ... thundered on" (*CS*, 899).
> *Indirect report of a thought*: "he thought of that Norman steed ..." (*CS*, 898).
> *Free indirect internal discourse, with uncertainty as to source*: "It was like those glasses, reading glasses which old ladies used to wear ... He lay still savoring this" (*CS*, 895).[18]

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from the world itself, and it is in the interior of a world already spoken and speaking that we reflect on it ... . Thought has nothing 'interior' about it; it does not exist outside of the world and outside of words. What deceives us about it, what makes us believe in a thought which supposedly exists for itself before being expressed, are the thoughts which have already been constitued and expressed, which we can recall silently to ourselves, and by means of which we create the illusion of an interior life. But in fact this supposed silence echoes with spoken words; this interior life is an interior language" (quoted by Anthony Wilden in Jacques Lacan, *The Language of the Self: The Function of Language in Psycho-analysis*, trans. Anthony Wilden, New York: Dell, 1968, 203).

17 Faulkner liked to have one character answer the unspoken thoughts of another, as if they could be heard. Labove in *The Hamlet*, we are told, remembers "the shoes" (the football shoes he wins for scoring touchdowns), but he says nothing about them, so far as we can tell. Yet Varner, watching Labove, seems to read his mind: "'Them shoes,' Varner said" (*H*, 109–110).

18 By "uncertainty as to source," I mean we cannot with assurance assign the image to the authorial voice, which seems to first offer it, or to the character's voice, who seems to claim it. Is he "savoring" the image itself, or his ingenuity in making such a metaphor? Whose

Movement into free indirect internal discourse: "it was Mrs Widdrington's, the Standard Oil Company's wife's, darkness he was was using to sleep in. She'd make a poet of you too, if you did not work anywhere" (*CS*, 897)
Direct quotation: "'I would like to perform something,' he said, shaping his lips soundlessly ..." (*CS*, 898).
Direct quotation, highly allusive: "Of a man, the worm should be lusty, lean, hairedover. Of women, of delicate girls briefly like heard music in tune, it should be suavely shaped, falling feeding into prettinesses, feeding" (*CS*, 897).
Direct quotation marked by italics and absence of punctuation: "what though to Me but as a seething of new milk Who am the Resurrection and the Life" (*CS*, 897).

This last example, and other manipulations of standard punctuation or typeface, illustrate how Faulkner (like many writers) also consistently tries to find modes of psychic expression more powerful than speech. The second gesture of the expressive function is the transcendence of speech. In *Absalom, Absalom!*, for example, he describes thinking as "louder" than speech, "filling the thunderous solitude of [Charles Etienne de Saint Velery Bon's] despair louder than speech could" (*AA*, 198), as "loud now, loud and fast too so [Bon] would not, could not, hear the thinking" (*AA*, 329).[19] More commonly Faulkner seeks to make writing itself expressive of consciousness. Functions of writing like print type, punctuation, syntactical irregularities, even on occasion drawings, all serve to distinguish thought from represented speech. Faulkner's textual techniques garner much of their expressive power *in contrast to* represented speech. In non–mimetic ways Faulkner wants to generate differences between speech and thought; the differences are "non–mimetic" because he seldom tries to imitate so much as to symbolize qualities of the mind. Thought achieves a status of its own, distinguishable from narrative discourse or represented speech. The symbolic force in "Carcassonne" of "where fell *where fell where I was King of Kings but the woman with the woman with the dog's eyes to knock my bones together and together*" (*CS*, 898) is enhanced by the odd syntax, the associative logic, and the italics, all of which *represent* consciousness without merely quoting verbal thought. Faulkner's texts create consciousness as at once a discourse transcendent of speech through purely textual maneuvers, and as also a verbal dialogue "occurring" within the awareness of the mind, between the mind and itself.

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metaphor is it?

19 Images of "loud" thinking also define states of high excitement, as when Elly's blood is "aloud with desperation and exultation and vindication too, talking inside her at the very brink of surrender loud as a voice" ("Elly," *CS*, 211), or when Sutpen as a boy comes to an understanding of why he was turned away by the Negro butler: "And then ... all of a sudden it was not thinking, it was something shouting it almost loud enough for his sisters on the other pallet ... to hear too ... it too fast, too mixed up to be thinking, it all kind of shouting at him at once, boiling out and over him" (*AA*, 237).

Faulkner sometimes treats thought explicitly as a form of writing, as visualizable words "appearing" silently in the mind. When the protagonist of "Carcassonne" "shap[es] his lips soundlessly in the darkness," he "says" "'I would like to perform something'" in that he expresses it and perhaps even moves his lips. But in another sense the words, which he never actually speaks, "shape" themselves on the screen or page of his imagination. A clearer example can be seen in "Mountain Victory": Weddel "seem[s] to watch the words shape quietly in the darkness above his mouth" (*CS*, 766). Mink Snopes lets words "take shape in his mind" (*M*, 42). In such images Faulkner symbolically depicts the writer who produces a soundless discourse that shapes itself in silent reading, and we return to an image that perhaps is an appropriate variation on that of a thinker "lying beneath a roof": for Faulkner's thinkers also, in a sense, "lie beneath speech." The italics which, for us, flicker in and out of "Carcassonne's" discourse create a reified speech of the mind, where speech loses its evanescent and momentary impermanence to become a hardened icon of thought's expressive production. The protagonist doesn't merely "imagine" the buckskin pony with eyes like blue electricity, he "sees" the words "*a buckskin pony with eyes like blue electricity.*" A crucial source of the representation of thought, then, is the text itself, as written object.

These four discursive practices — the meditative "lying beneath a roof" and the release into epiphany, sleep or death; the dialogical splitting of self and "Other"; the layering of the psychic space; and the reification of internal speech into writing — all bear the symbolic weight of dying, of passing through the last instants of physical existence or of lying in the coffin, in the grave. (Addie Bundren lies beneath the "roof" of her actual coffin — her monologue literalizes the symbolic relation between meditation, epiphany, and death.) Throughout "Carcassonne" we return to the present context of the musing protagonist lying in his rat–infested garret, and are thus reminded of the earthbound locus of his meditation. Self–consciousness or awareness comes most powerfully in Faulkner to those passing from one mental state to another, from wakefulness to oblivion, from life into death. Those in Faulkner who meditate do so at the surface of oblivion, about to fall into its depths, "taking [their thoughts] into sleep with [them]" ("The Brooch," *CS*, 654). For Darl Bundren or Bayard Sartoris the oblivion is that of sleep; for Gail Hightower, Mink Snopes or Weddel, it is the oblivion of death (and I agree with Polk's interpretation that the protagonist of "Carcassonne" sinks downward beneath his own discourse into death). The passage into oblivion in Faulkner is often itself an epiphanic moment when some insight bursts into a thinker's final instant of consciousness. Thought, or at least meditation, is always a sinking, a drifting, into death, a "lying beneath" a roof, beneath speech,

beneath life itself. The internal life for Faulkner seems, inevitably, to be associated with the symbolic burial of the body and a yearning for an imaginative realm that tries but fails to transcend death.

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Faulkner and the Paradoxes of Description

Description has long been and probably still is the stepchild of poetics. From Antiquity to the late eighteenth century all rhetorical treatises relegated it to a purely peripheral function, and modern theory has given it hardly more attention. Yet in its hunger for particulars the novel has been dedicated to description since its beginnings. The desire to take hold of a fragment of the world, however small and trivial, and then to lay it out under the lens of language, has been a strong impulse with most fictionmakers since Defoe, and in the nineteenth century, during the golden age of realism, it was stronger than ever before. As Claude Simon observed two years ago in his Nobel Prize Address, "With Balzac ... there began to appear lengthy and minute descriptions of places and people, descriptions which in the course of the century would not only become more and more frequent, but which, instead of being confined to the beginning of the narrative or to the first appearance of the characters, would be broken up and blended in more or less massive doses with the telling of the action, so that they ended up playing the role of a Trojan horse and expelling the fable which they were assumed to flesh out."[1]

If not positive faith in the transparency and transitivity of words, description, whatever its object, assumes at the very least a temporary suspension of disbelief in the naming power of language. Small wonder, then, that it should have been given a privileged status in a strongly referent–oriented genre like the novel. Yet, over the past decades the premises of mimetic representation underlying realistic fiction have come under attack from various quarters, and in any serious discussion of the novel exposure of the so–called "referential illusion" is by now *de rigueur*. We have been taught to distrust the old magic of mimesis; we know that literary representation is at best highly problematic. How literature relates, if at all, to reality is a matter of endless epistemological speculation, but it takes indeed a muddled mind to mistake literary descriptions for paintings or photographs: whatever mental froth they may leave in their wake, whatever images they may prompt in our minds, they have never *shown*

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[1] *Discours de Stockholm* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1986), pp. 19–20. My translation.

anything to anyone; all that we can safely assert is that they are made of words and that they *signify*.

In literature they signify of course more richly and more resonantly than in common parlance, and can in fact hardly help doing so. They gather meaning like dust or moss: no novelist, however fresh his eye, however original his talent, can avoid building on the *topoi* of previous descriptions, and nothing is more difficult in describing than to break through the clutter of time–honored clichés. This may be one of the many reasons why description has always been an object of suspicion. And yet, as Simon's statement implies, the decline of realistic illusionism that started with Flaubert, Henry James, and Conrad, did not render description obsolete, far from it. It lost its Balzacian innocence, however. As "point of view" — a matter of optics, to begin with — became a serious concern for novelists, descriptions ceased to refer to a massive, self–evident external world, and increasingly called attention to themselves as individualized *views*. Pointing at once in three directions, the perceived object, the perceiving subject, and the area in between, the distance traveled by a particular eye from a particular point in space at a particular moment in time, they could now be drawn outside in or inside out, like gloves, with no way of ascertaining which was the right side. And as Jamesian "reflectors" multiplied, the mirror of the world was shattered into myriads of private reflections. Whenever perspectivism takes over, truth is in trouble; its belated advent in the novel was bound ultimately to ruin the whole edifice of realism, and its radicalization by modern writers brought it indeed to a speedy end.

Faulkner is, I think, a case in point. Like Joyce, Proust, and Virginia Woolf, he tipped the balance in favor of interiority, and to him as to them the rendering of the inner man implied a new language for fiction. What mattered to all of these writers was less the external world than its impingement on consciousness, its refractions through the prism of an individual mind.[2] That "stream–of–consciousness" disrupted narrative order is by now common knowledge, but what did it do to description?

In interior monologues, like those of *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*, description is of necessity sharply focalized. What needs to be stressed, however, is that interior discourse, in its supposedly uncontrolled immediacy, rules out sustained description, even as it precludes straightforward narrative. Its purpose is to mimic mental processes, to register things as they *come to mind* and linger there. Turning inward, de-

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[2] "Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness." Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction," *The Common Reader*, First Series (London: The Hogarth Press, 1925), 190.

scription thus became a phenomenological record of *perceptions* experienced or remembered, and if there was to be any pattern, it could only be the hidden order of a private phantasmagoria. Paddling down a "stream of consciousness" leaves little time for sight–seeing. In an interior monologue description can only be a description in bits and pieces.

In Faulkner's less experimental novels, description is far less fragmented and chaotic, but even there focalization is seldom missing. Consider, for example, the opening of *Pylon*. The novel starts with Jiggs standing in front of a store window and staring at a pair of boots. What follows, down to the end of the first paragraph, is a detailed description of the window exhibits. Jiggs then enters the store and looks about him, which justifies a brief description of its inside. A conversation begins between Jiggs and the clerk, who, leaning back on the counter, sizes up his potential customer. The perspective is reversed: Jiggs, the focalizer, is now in turn focalized, and becomes an object beheld, a figure portrayed.

The first two pages of *Pylon* nicely illustrate Philippe Hamon's formula of the typical description pattern of the realistic–naturalistic novel: character + gaze + object to be described + description.[3] Faulkner uses this standard procedure in most of his novels: when the narrative focuses on an object, an interior or a landscape, it is often because the gaze of some character has come to alight on it. Internal focalization, however, is by no means an exclusive device. Quite often, too, a character's vision is firmly held within the narrator's vision or at any rate rendered through his voice, and it may even happen that internal focalization is abandoned altogether, the describer then resuming all his traditional prerogatives.

Of the many descriptive devices evolved by post–Flaubertian novelists there is probably none that Faulkner has not used, nor has he hesitated to revert to the recipes of the old masters whenever they suited his purposes. Yet all in all his novels are indeed eloquent testimony to two major developments of Western fiction since Flaubert: the trend, probably encouraged by photography and cinema, toward ever more sharply visualized description, and the concomitant implosion of the latter within narrative discourse.

In his novels, however, what Simon calls "the fable" is never dismissed. For Faulkner, there are always tales to be told, and if description can be said to threaten the narrative, it is by way of insidious infiltration, not brutal elimination. What has happened, in fact, is a blurring of boundaries, if not mutual absorption, so that narrative and description be-

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[3] See "Qu'est–ce qu'une description?," *Poétique*, 12 (1972), 475. Philippe Hamon's is to my knowledge the first serious attempt to theorize description. See also his *Introduction à l'analyse du descriptif* (Paris: Hachette, 1981).

come virtually indistinguishable.[4] Here again, to be sure, we have to beware of unwarranted extrapolation: descriptive passages can be found in Faulkner which are still to some degree self–contained textual unities, but set pieces, such as the rhapsody on the mule in *Sartoris* or the florid evocations of nature in the Ike Snopes episode of *The Hamlet*, are rather exceptional. What strikes us in reading Faulkner's novels is less the wealth of individual descriptions than their descriptive saturation.

The close intertwining of narration and description leaves neither unaltered, and both bear the seal of *temporality*. Faulknerian description is never just a mere display of objects in space; it digs and delves, explores their past, exhumes their secrets, and so provides them with a measure of temporal depth. Objects in Faulkner appear to absorb temporality like sponges, and so turn into vestiges, relics, fetishes, memorials, exhibiting the stigmata of time as the varnish of an old painted canvas shows its craquelures. Description, with Faulkner, partakes of archaeology. In *Sartoris*, a trivial pipe, because it once belonged to John Sartoris and bears the marks of his teeth, expands instantaneously into a miniature funerary monument:

> The bowl of the pipe was ornately carved, and it was charred with much usage, and on the bit were the prints of his father's teeth, where he had left the very print of his ineradicable bones as though in enduring stone, like the creatures of that prehistoric day that were grandly conceived and executed either to exist very long or to vanish utterly when dead from an earth shaped and furnished for punier things. (*SAR*, 2)[5]

Either prompted by the evocative power of the object described or set off by some comparison, micro–narratives thus often come to germinate within

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[4] Henry James had already objected to the arbitrariness of the established opposition between narration and description: "Nothing, for instance, is more possible than that [an author] be of a turn of mind for which this odd, literal opposition of description and dialogue, incident and description, has little meaning and light. People often talk of these things as if they had a kind of internecine distinctness, instead of melting into each other at every breath, and being intimately associated parts of one general effort of expression. I cannot imagine composition existing in a series of blocks, nor conceive, in any novel worth discussing at all, of a passage of description that is not in intention narrative, a passage of dialogue that is not in its intention descriptive..." *The Art of Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), 12–13.

[5] As the passages from T*he Wild Palms, Pylon, Light in August* and *The Sound and the Fury* quoted further on confirm, the *time–worn* object — threadbare clothes, deteriorated tools, broken furniture, dilapidated houses — is the Faulknerian object *par excellence*. But novelistic interest in such objects is by no means a recent development. As Michel Butor points out, there were already many chipped and broken plates in the picaresque novel, and after Balzac fiction has been invaded by deteriorated objects: shaped and distorted by man, infused with historicity, these objects are "the bones of time," "the fossiles of human reality." Cf. M. Butor, "La Philosophie de l'ameublement," *Répertoire II* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1964), 51–60.

the interstices of description. In fact, Faulkner's descriptions recount nearly as much as they describe; and to this reciprocal contamination of the descriptive and the narrative Faulkner's fiction owes some of its most paradoxical effects: especially that of arrested motion or dynamized immobility — what Darl, in *As I Lay Dying*, calls "fury in itself quiet with stagnation" (*AILD*, 156).

At its most effective, it produces the *tableau vivant*, a figure strongly reminiscent of "hypotyposis," which Pierre Fontanier defined in the following way: "Hypotyposis paints things with such liveliness and energy that it puts them so to speak before the eyes, and turns a narrative or a description into an image, a tableau, or even a living scene."[6] The "image" thus generated is presumed to be of such compelling power that representation gives way to *presentification*, putting us truly in the *presence* of the object or the event. Much could be said, of course, on the chimerical nature of such an ambition and on the concept of imitation it implies. Suffice it to note that Faulkner's *tableaux vivants* — Lena's journey and the timeless, friezelike procession of mules and wagons in *Light in August*, the encounter of Henry and Judith after the murder of Charles Bon in *Absalom, Absalom!* or the superb tableau of the death of Old Ben in *Go Down, Moses* — count among the most memorable, the most *arresting* moments of his writing.

Like motion–picture freeze shots, these *tableaux* are meant to capture the quiver of time, suspending and solemnizing life's tumult in vibrant stases where the readable seems to reach out for the visible. They are spells wrought by art, though, triumphs of artifice in which literature seldom fails to pay a tribute to its rivals: an allusion to the Keatsian urn in *Light in August*, references to Beardsley's drawings in *Absalom, Absalom!*, and to statuary in *Go Down, Moses*. These animated descriptions are in fact word–imitations of iconic imitations; in order to affect the reader as *tableaux vivants*, they have to point to real tableaux, and to appropriate some of their virtues. *Ut pictura poesis:* Faulkner probably never quite renounced the old Horatian belief in the commutability of artistic media.

But let me come back to the ordinary business of description, and to the imperious movement of expansion and annexation through which it asserts itself in Faulkner's texts.

At its simplest, at what might be called the zero degree of description, the expansion is effected through the sheer accumulation of names. With Melville, Whitman, Twain, Thomas Wolfe, and James Agee, Faulkner is one of the great list–makers of American literature. His appetite for *catalogues* is indeed almost as strong as theirs. Toward the end of "The Golden

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[6] *Les Figures du discours* (Paris: Flammarion, 1977), 390.

Dome," one of the historical sections of *Requiem for a Nun*, we first find an entry of Mississippi patronyms, then a guidebook–like list of the facilities of Jackson, the capital of the State: transportation, accommodation, radio stations, entertainments. The descriptive text, if text at all, consists of a pantonym ("Jackson") followed by a nomenclature(*RN*, 97).[7]

Faulkner of course seldom contents himself with such bare inventories. To describe is not just to name; it is above all to predicate. Whence the recourse to *adjectives*, of which, as we all know, Faulkner made lavish use, often hanging three, four or five epithets on the same name. Whence, too, the need for syntactic structures capable of harboring all the arborescences of the descriptive system: the branching out through relative clauses, apposition and parentheses amply answers the need.

Here, much more in Faulkner's typical "full" manner, is the description of the cottage rented by Harry Wilbourne and Charlotte Rittenmeyer in *The Wild Palms*:

> They took possession that afternoon of the cottage, the shack, which contained the one bed whose springs and mattress were not very good, and the stove with its one frying pan incrusted by generations of cooking fish, and the coffee pot and the meager collection of mismatched iron spoons and forks and knives and cracked cups and saucers and drinking vessels which had once been containers of bought jams and jellies, and the new beach chair in which the woman lay all day long apparently watching the palm fronds clashing with their wild dry bitter sound against the bright glitter of the water while the man carried driftwood into the kitchen. (*WP*, 8)

What we have here is another itemized inventory, patterned like the previous one: first a key–word, a pantonym ("the cottage, the shack"), then a list of synecdochic predicates ("bed," "spring," "mattress," "stove," etc.). First the naming of the whole, then the enumeration of its parts. But this time a series of isotopic qualifiers ("not so good," "meager," "mismatched," "cracked") have been added to underscore the shabbiness of the place; and through information on the past of the objects and the present activities of the new tenants, the narrative is put back in motion. Noteworthy too, toward the end of the passage, is the stylistic intensification, with its effects of assonance and rhyme ("wild dry bitter"/"bright glitter"), and its hints at the symbolism of the palm–tree, whose orchestration is resumed in the late chapters. This description is obviously much more than a mere inventory.

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[7] This nomenclature is in fact an almost literal transcription of that found in *Mississippi: A Guide to the Magnolia State*, published in 1938, and of which Faulkner had two copies in his library. "The Golden Dome" includes many unavowed borrowings from this guide. On this point, see Thomas L. McHaney, "Faulkner Borrows from the Mississippi Guide," *Mississippi Quarterly*, 19(Summer, 1966), 116–120.

Even stranger, more uncanny in its crowdedness, Faulknerian with a vengeance, is this description of the Reporter's studio in *Pylon*:

> It was a gaunt cavern roofed like a barn, with scuffed and worn and even rotted floorboards and scrofulous walls and cut into two uneven halves, bedroom and studio, by an old theatre curtain and cluttered with slovenly mended and useless tables draped with imitation batik bearing precarious lamps made of liquorbottles, and other objects of oxidised metal made for what original purpose no man knew, and hung with more batik and machine-made Indian blankets and indecipherable basrelief plaques vaguely religio-Italian primitive. It was filled with objects whose desiccated and fragile inutility bore a kinship to their owner's physical being as though he and they were all conceived in one womb and spawned in one litter — objects which possessed that quality of veteran prostitutes: of being overlaid by the ghosts of so many anonymous proprietors that even the present titleholder held merely rights but no actual possession — a room apparently exhumed from a theatrical morgue and rented intact from one month to the next. (*P*, 90)

Again a *locus inamoenus*, a space of decay and desolation, "cluttered" with the junk of the modern city, such as can be found in many of Faulkner's novels. Description here follows a double track: both *metonymic* and *metaphoric*: the studio is at once a hollow in the earth, a private junkyard, a room for theatrical performances, and a repository for corpses — anything but a *home*. Much like a convex mirror, the description offers a miniaturized reflection of the whole novel, a novel which is throughout a grotesque and carnivalesque *mise en scène* of dispossession and death. But the lugubrious studio refers back even more patently to its lugubrious tenant: the worthless odds and ends piled up there bear "a kinship to their owner's physical being, as though he and they were all conceived in one womb and spawned in one litter"; they are the flotsam of urban life, for which nobody cares to claim ownership, and they belong nowhere just as the Reporter does. And in pointing up the analogy between setting and character, the text itself invites us to read this topography as a portrait.

Like narrative discourse, description has its tools, tricks, and tropes, and since all descriptions tend to *detail* the contiguous elements of a set of givens, it is hardly surprising that they should give primacy to metonymy and synecdoche.[8] For Faulkner, however, whose work belongs as much to the symbolist or allegorizing tradition of American *romance* as to that of the European *novel*, and who, in his younger years, before becoming a novelist, was a zealous epigone of the English Romantics and the French Symbolists, *metaphor* counted at least as much as these two figures of contiguity, and it is to a large extent to metaphor that his novels

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[8] See Roman Jakobson, "Deux aspects du langage et deux types d'aphasie," *Essais de linguistique générale* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1963), 62–63.

owe their "poetic" charge.[9]

While metonymy allows description to expand, and saturates its immediate referentiality through the accumulation of "true details," metaphor opens it up to other fields of knowledge and other areas of experience, deploys its possibilities of meaning, and pre–orients its interpretation. Metonymy serves *mimesis*, metaphor promotes *semiosis*.

Yet with Faulkner metaphor does not function as it would in poetic discourse, and *actualized* metaphors are rather rare in his fiction. What, for example, of figurative language in *The Sound and the Fury*? Faulkner criticism has accustomed us to reading recurrent words of Quentin's monologue such as "water," "door," "shadow" or "honeysuckle" in metaphorical terms. Now all of these words designate elements of the novel's "real" setting. Associated in Quentin's neurotic mind with a number of remembered scenes, and especially with the haunting memory of his lost sister, they are first of all metonymies. Yet insofar as obsessive repetition makes them eventually reverberate with the full complexity of his affective experience, they are also "objective correlatives" or metaphors — metaphors through metonymy, precisely, whose vehicle is borrowed from the spatio–temporal world (or diegesis) of the narrative.[10] But formally nothing allows us to label them as such. It is the reader who, retroactively, in reading the successive word–occurrences paradigmatically, converts them into metaphors, and as much could be said of structural metaphors like the one from which the counterpoint in *The Wild Palms* proceeds.

Another figure of analogy stopping short of metaphor is the *simile*. With Faulkner comparisons are extremely frequent and often come in thick clusters. Here, as a sample, is the portrait of Thomas Sutpen by Rosa Coldfield:

> [H]e looked *like* a man who had been sick. Not *like* a man who had been peacefully ill in bed and had recovered to move with a sort of diffident and tentative amazement in a world which he had believed himself on the point of surrendering, but *like* a man who had been through some solitary furnace experience which was more than just fever, *like* an explorer say, who not only had to face the normal hardship of the pursuit which he chose but was overtaken by the added and unforeseen handicap of the fever ... A man with a big frame but gaunt now almost to emaciation, with a short reddish beard which *resembled* a disguise and above which his pale eyes had a quality at once visionary and alert, ruthless and reposed in a face whose flesh had the *appearance* of pottery ... (*AA*, 32–33; my emphasis)

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9 On the poeticalness of Faulkner's fiction, see Lothar Hönnighausen, "The Novel as Poem: The Place of Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* in the History of Reading," *Amerikastudien*, 31 (1986), 127–140.

10 See Gérard Genette, *Figures III* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1972), 47–48.

In Rosa's *flumen orationis* the comparison develops tentatively, through successive variations and approximations, and gives rise once again to narrative digressions, adumbrates a fiction within fiction by the sudden postulation of a fever–ridden explorer.

Opening wide the floodgates of the imagination, metaphorization crosses boundaries, shatters identities, and disrupts established patterns. The Surrealists, despite their professed disdain for description, often crossed the magic bridges it offered their poetic invention, and in *As I Lay Dying*, perhaps his most daring venture into the world's strangeness, Faulkner himself used it as a matrix for metamorphoses.[11] But analogies, with him, eventually bring us always back to the human order (or disorder): things and places seldom keep silent; sooner or later they will tell you a story, *their* story, which is always also the story of a man, a woman, a family or a community; sooner or later, they will talk about passion and pain, desire and death. Thus, in *Pylon*, the Reporter's shoddy bric–à–brac; thus, in *Light in August*, Hightower's chair, as seen by Byron (and as Van Gogh or Soutine might have painted it):

> It is a canvas deck chair, mended and faded and sagged so long to the shape of Hightower's body that even when empty it seems to hold still in ghostly embrace the owner's obese shapelessness; approaching, Byron thinks how the mute chair evocative of disuse and supineness and shabby remoteness from the world, is somehow the symbol and the being too of the man himself. (*LA*, 342)

Faulkner's tragic and anthropomorphic vision leaves nothing outside its charmed circle. Every object is man–shaped, memory–shaped, even if it happens to be a stone, a tree or a flower, and there is hardly a place in his novels that is not somehow a reminder of human affairs.[12]

Faulkner's descriptions are never dispassionate records of the given. Nothing could be more alien to his world than the neutral, geometric contours and aseptic forms we can find in the deliberately depthless descriptions of the *nouveau roman* of the sixties. Contrary to Robbe–Grillet, who took great pains to erase all trace of analogy from his narratives, Faulkner, true to Poe, Hawthorne and Melville, his great American ancestors, never gave up deciphering appearances.

The visible is not enough; what matters is precisely the dark "heart of things." The descriptive luxuriance of Faulkner's novels answers less to a desire for exhaustiveness than to the need to penetrate to the core. Over

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[11] On metamorphosis in *As I Lay Dying*, see my *Parcours de Faulkner* (Paris: Editions Ophrys, 1982), 180–182.

[12] The descriptions of houses are particularly revealing in this respect: Hightower's house in *Light in August*, Rosa Coldfield's and the Sutpen manor where Henry is awaiting death in *Absalom, Absalom!*, and Emily Grierson's house in "A Rose for Emily," are all mausoleums inhabited by living ghosts.

and over again his descriptions glide from the concrete to the abstract and from accidence to essence. Behind the variable, Faulkner searches for the invariant; beneath the shimmer of the transitory and the contingent he hopes to discover the permanence of the "immemorial." Thus Dilsey, in the final section of *The Sound and the Fury*, is first portrayed with unsparing realism as a sick old black woman, and then transfigured by Faulkner's rhetoric into a monumental emblem of Endurance, "as though muscle and tissue had been courage and fortitude which the days or the years had consumed until only the indomitable skeleton was left rising like a ruin or a landmark above the somnolent and impervious guts" (*SF*, 265–66). Perishable flesh has been reduced to its more durable armature, the skeleton, which becomes here an ironic (but not just ironic) symbol of resistance to time: the reduction is twice emblematic, in that it aims as well at a *reduction of the object to its essence*, which is perhaps with Faulkner as with Proust the ultimate utopia of description.[13] It might be argued as well that Dilsey becomes an *allegorical* figure, and there is further evidence of Faulkner's allegorical bent in the same section of *The Sound and the Fury* when Benjy's screams are described as "the grave hopeless sound of all voiceless misery under the sun" (*SF*, 316). Allegorizing is in fact a frequent feature in Faulkner's characterization. Just remember Popeye in *Sanctuary*, Thomas Sutpen in *Absalom, Absalom!*, Flem and Eula in the Snopes trilogy: they are all Janus–like figures, to be construed both according to the realistic code, as verisimilar characters endowed with physical, psychological, and social properties, and according to the allegorical code, as "materializations" of transindividual essences.[14] And this holds equally true of places: in *Light in August* the roads which Lena travels eventually become *the* road, the streets of Christmas's wandering become *the* street, even as from novel to novel the jail and the courthouse of Jefferson become the poignant epitome of all jails and courthouses.

Faulkner's descriptions spring from the desire to speak the real, all of it, and to realize this ambition he drew freely on all available resources. His descriptions are therefore seldom radical departures from the practices of his predecessors. Discarding adjectives, metaphors and symbols was for him out of the question. Faulknerian description thrives on expansion and excess, not on denial and exclusion.

The paradox is that in its overabundance it confesses again and again its incapacity to master its object. Descriptive luxuriance is spurious wealth,

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[13] This also seems to be what Claude Simon's descriptions aim at, as Martin Van Buuren argues in his fine essay, "L'essence des choses: Etude de la description dans l'œuvre de Claude Simon," *Poétique*, 43 (September, 1980), 324–333.

[14] On this point, see Jean–Jacques Mayoux in "La Création du réel," *Vivants Piliers: Le roman anglo–saxon et les symboles* (Paris: Julliard, 1960), 250–270.

a sign, not of plenitude, but of impotence, recalling that the enterprise of totalization and predication is a movement of infinite regress. No description can ever exhaust its object; the describer's task is endless.

It is also important to realize that with Faulkner metaphoric imagination ultimately fails to fulfill the transcendental unifying function it still had with Proust. His comparisons underline the gesture which calls for them and often assume a definitely hypothetical character. Proposing rather than positing equivalences, the *like* or *as if* structure maintains a visible gap between the comparer and the compared, and often flaunts it almost brazenly. Furthermore, many of Faulkner's comparisons lack all metonymic motivation and strike us by their seeming incongruence. As long as girls are likened to trees, flowers or birds, we stay within a poetic convention which makes the comparisons acceptable. But what's the point of comparing a young woman's leg to "the lever which moves the world" (*AILD*, 97–98)? A man's body to "a modernistic lampstand" (*S*, 6)? A pair of eyes to "little bicycle wheels at dizzy speed" (*S*, 145)?[15] By classic standards these analogies are far–fetched, if not "irrelevant." We probably would not mind if we encountered them in a poem by John Donne or André Breton, but in fictional prose these "poetic" deviations are breaches of novelistic decorum which undermine realistic plausibiliy.

Furthermore, Faulkner's metaphors are often mixed: the images he weaves about an object or a character seldom belong to the same paradigm. Thus Popeye, in *Sanctuary*, is cobbled together with metallic arms, doll–like hands, rubber eyes, and a waxen head: heterogeneity triumphs. Far from stabilizing the referent, far from establishing more firmly its concept, Faulkner's use of comparisons, in giving primacy to expressiveness, distorts it beyond recognition.

In much the same way, negation, preterition and oxymoron, which are also recurrent devices of Faulkner's style, emphasize the hazards, difficulties, and shortcomings of description. Often the object to be described can only be apprehended contradictorily, as a conjunction of opposites, or negatively, as an addition of lacks. An extreme case in this respect is the "nondescript" character of the Reporter in *Pylon*: the words with which he is introduced are "something" and "a creature" (*P*, 17); he has no origin, no face, no name, nothing he can safely call his own, least of all a recognizable identity. He is never described like someone we might have met and seen, yet around this vacuum, this non–identity, Faulkner's rhetoric spins its similes: we shall never know who and what the Reporter *is*, but we are told what he *looks like*: a corpse, a skeleton, a scarecrow, a ghost, an

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[15] On the "irrelevance" of poetic metaphors, see Jean Cohen, "La comparaison poétique: essai de systématique," *Langages*, 12 (December, 1968), 638 - 42.

apparition from "the other side of the Styx" (*P*, 43). The "character–effect" here comes down to the effect of bewilderment which the sheer sight of the Reporter produces whenever and wherever he appears, and this effect in turn is nothing but a language effect, that is, a series of comparisons in which the compared is but the shadow cast by comparers. The Reporter in *Pylon* is pure verbal construct. Which is in fact what all fictional creatures are, but usually the novelist takes great pains to make us forget that his characters are made of words.

In the same novel there occur many words with negative prefixes or suffixes such as "weightless," "homeless," "nondescript," "inscrutable," "invisible," "incredible": things are bereft of substance and weight, people have no place to dwell, and the very words proclaim their impotence, their incapacity to convey anything but the invisibility of what they should make us see, and the unreadability of what they should give to read.

Perhaps I should not have dwelt at such length on *Pylon*, which certainly does not count among Faulkner's major accomplishments. But it is just because of its monstrosity, its almost caricatural idiosyncrasies that this flawed novel deserves our attention. Less smoothly and skilfully integrated than in the materpieces, Faulkner's descriptive devices can be apprehended in *Pylon* as if aggrandized by a magnifying glass. And more than elsewhere we sense here the tension between the mimetic intention, the will to represent reality, and the keen awareness of the inadequacy of language, and more specifically, as far as description is concerned, the utter incompatibility of writing and seeing.

"Can it be by some horrible mischance that without knowing it you listen and see in one language and then do what you call writing in another?" the newspaper editor asks the Reporter (*P*, 43). The Reporter's mischance is the misfortune of all writers: "it is in vain that we say what we see; what we see never resides in what we say. And it is in vain that we attempt to show, by the use of images, metaphors, or similes, what we are saying; the space where they achieve their splendor is not that deployed by our eyes but that defined by the sequential elements of syntax."[16] Between the spaces of light and language, the seeable and the speakable, there is a gap not to be bridged: once it has been stripped of its exorbitant pretensions, description points to the helplessness of language in the face of reality. True, there is no innocent eye any more than there is an innocent voice or an innocent pen. Our perceptions are patterned by public codes and private desires just as our readings are, and neither

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[16] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1973), 9.

paintings nor novels provide unmediated access to reality. Yet while the gaze tends to frame, to gather up and hold together in its embrace, writing — irreversibly sequential, timebound, and ever belated — fragments, dislocates, dismembers, adding word to word without ever adding up. To reconcile the verbal with the visible would be to abolish the antinomy of time and space: it just cannot be done.

Writing can never deceive the eye as painting can. Pliny tells us the story of how Zeuxis tricked some birds by means of a lifelike picture of grapes, and then Parrhasius tricked Zeuxis with an even more compelling painting of a curtain. Such *trompe–l'oeil* effects are beyond the writer's capacities. Referring from one code to another rather than to an extratextual referent, description can only be the copy of a copy.[17] But descriptions in Faulkner hold our interest for other and better reasons than their hypothetical relation to a referent. What captures our attention, is not so much what is *described* as the sheer movement and momentum of *describing*, its poignant urgency, its headlong rush, its furious forward flight. Even in their quieter, more pastoral moods, Faulkner's landscapes are anything but Dutch. Even stillness *moves*. There is always the impetuosity of improvisation or the impatience of the quest: adjectives tossed off as if at random, salvoes of similes, tumbling floods of words, and all of a sudden, amidst the turbulence, a face, a silhouette, a room, a tree comes startlingly alive. Alive on the page, alive in the mind, not in the eye. And yet Faulkner's harsh stylization reminds one almost irresistibly of the splashes of vivid color, the bold brutal brushstrokes or knifestrokes of the Fauves and the Expressionists.

Painting: how not to think of it wherever description is at stake? Are descriptions not presumed to be "word–pictures"? Still, what Faulkner's writing recalls is less the completed picture than, precisely, the gesture of painting, the choice and handling of pigments and the stroke of the brush — the tangible signature of a vanished presence on a piece of canvas.

Painter and writer are alike in that they both leave traces to be remembered by. But again, let us beware of pat parallels. Faulkner does not describe his corn fields as Van Gogh painted his wheat fields. We cannot feast our eyes on Lena Grove as on Bellini's Madonnas. The novelist's limits, his possibilities and impossibilities, are not the painter's. Even if

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[17] "... through an initial rite, the writer must first transform the 'real' into a painted (framed) object; after which he can take down this object, *remove* it from his picture: in short, depict it (to depict is to unroll the carpet of codes, to refer not from a language to a referent but from one code to another)," Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (Paris: Editions du Seuil), 1970, 61. My translation. On the relationship between writing and painting, see the subtle and suggestive essay by Bernard Vouilloux, "Le tableau: description et peinture," *Poétique*, 65 (February 1986), 3–18.

in rare moments of grace he may manage to fix "the admirable quiver of time" (*l'admirable tremblement du temps*[18]), the painter is riveted to the immanence of space and to the mute enigma of light, color, and form. And although he never paints exactly as he sees, and the spectator never sees exactly as the painter saw, they join eyes in a common celebration or a common questioning of space. As to the writer, what he has to offer is always both less and more than meets the eye. Try as he may to render justice to the visible, he can say things only in and through their absence, their incessant dispersal and withdrawal in the silence of the page. It is from this infirmity that he holds his sole power and privilege: to seize the elusive movement through which time becomes space and space becomes time.

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[18] Chateaubriand's phrase about Poussin's painting, *Le Déluge*.

Michel Gresset (Paris)

Faulkner's Voice

The ears can hear deeper than the eyes can see
D.H. Lawrence

On May 7, 1958, at the very end of a rather unexciting interview with the psychiatrists of the University of Virginia, after evading the inescapable question about why he wrote by saying, with tongue in cheek, "The demon lit on my shoulders. I dont know why he came, why he picked up me. That's the only explanation I have," Faulkner volunteered the following statement after a somewhat meaningful pause: "It may be that I took up writing as — what do you call it? — a protest to being — against being small and insignificant, that I wanted to be big and brave and handsome and rich, it could be that, I dont know." This is one of the many taped passages which the editors of the class conferences at the University of Virginia chose to leave out.[1]

I find this statement extremely interesting. For one thing, as far as I know, this was the only time when Faulkner gave a hint as to the existence of what Roland Barthes would no doubt have called a *biographeme* — in this case, his small size (five feet five inches, as we know: about the same size as Beethoven). Now there are two ways of dealing with this, one structural, the other genetic, neither of which shall be my preoccupation in this paper. I am not going to be concerned with the structural relationship between this "biographeme" and the work — particularly with the recurrence of characters who could be called "great small characters," e.g. Popeye, Flem or Mink Snopes, Ratliff, or the old general in *A Fable*, or of characters who "elongate" or magnify themselves by riding horses, flying aeroplanes, or having tall statues or monuments erected on their tombstones.

Nor am I going to discuss the genetic interest of this admission. This would be quite another topic, and a somewhat hypothetical one on theoretical grounds — as much, say, as the part played by Jean–Paul Sartre's squint in his chapter on the glance in *L'Etre et le néant*. As the philosopher Jean Brun wrote, "It could be asked whether there are not some

[1] The statement would have had its place at the end of session 32 of *FU*, 269.

powerful biographical influences in Sartre's theory of the glance, which count as much as his phenomenology. The reason for thinking so is the fact that Sartre has never really made it clear why the other's glance should make him into a thing nor, above all, why the glance cannot have any other outcome than in conflict."[2] In the same way, it could be asked whether there are not "some powerful biographical influences" in the remarkable part played by the distortions of the human body in Faulkner's fiction, and why his work evinces such a need for "elongation" or magnification.

My interest lies in a second "biographeme," which is revealed not in, but by Faulkner's statement — as well as by almost any other of his many spoken and recorded statements. As those who have had an opportunity to hear Faulkner alive know, and anybody can verify by listening to the tapes of the University of Virginia or to the records he made — Faulkner's voice was so characteristically, so extremely thin and flat and soft and quiet as to merit either of two sets of predicates.

One of these two sets is precisely the pair of adjectives "small and insignificant" which he used as it were privately, as a suggestion to answer the Charlottesville psychiatrists' curiosity about why he wrote at all. The other is the diptych he used in his highly public and eloquent, and yet admittedly almost inaudible Nobel Prize speech, immediately after the all too well–known statement "I decline to accept the end of man." Here is the full sentence, which is carefully built into a crescendo — immediately undercut by the final anticlimax:

> It is easy enough to say that man is immortal simply because he will endure: that when the last ding–dong of doom has clanged and faded from the last worthless rock hanging tideless in the last red and dying evening, that even then there will still be one more sound: that of his puny inexhaustible voice, still talking. (*ESPL*, 120)

Faulkner's imaginative representation of "the end of man," both in this speech and in his fiction, is a striking structure involving both visual and aural elements. I call it a structure of Faulkner's imagination, like the scene at the spring or the climbing of a hill, because it emerged as a poetical feature in his fiction long before it became the main rhetorical device in his best–known speech. In its Stockholm version, the structure is given a particularly powerful effect by the remarkable economy of the speech and by the hammering effect of its wording. The syllable "doom" calls for the alliterative "ding–dong," and only after this has "clanged and faded" like a bell can the remarkably anticlimactic "puny inexhaustible

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[2] Jean Brun, "Le Regard et l'existence," *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 3 (July–September, 1957), 286–302.

voice" be heard. When this motif is taken up again in *A Fable,* however, one notices the addition of the conjunction: "his puny and inexhaustible voice still talking, still planning" (*FAB*, 354). The question might be: is it puny and yet inexhaustible, or is it inexhaustible because it is puny?

Whatever it may be, Faulkner's use of voice — not as a category of narratology, but as the evocation, both literally and metaphorically, of this quintessential human characteristic — in his fiction is very much associated with the individual. The best, indeed the exemplary expression of this is to be found nowhere else but in the Nobel Prize speech. As we read it now, almost forty years after the event, how can we doubt that this was not a speech delivered to humanity, but to his fellow writers, and that the "pinnacle" that Faulkner was speaking from was only physically the Stockholm podium; how could it not be clear to everybody, *beginning with himself*, that the reason why he was there was none other than his work?

Indeed, Faulkner's Nobel Prize speech makes no effort to conceal an "I" trying to reach "the young men and women already dedicated to the same anguish and travail ..." (*ESPL*, 119). In fact, I cannot help being struck by the mirror effect of what he said in Stockholm on December 10, 1950, and what he said in Charlottesville on May 7, 1958. There is an unmistakably reflexive quality in Faulkner's Nobel Prize final diptych about the poet's voice: in other words, Faulkner seems to be saying, even when the last blood–red sun sets in the Western sky, Faulkner's voice shall still be heard: however "small and insignificant" it may be/have been, it can be counted on because by definition, being a writer's voice, it is inexhaustible, even beyond the disappearance of the body of which it was the emanation. Indeed, the third sentence after this, which is the last sentence of the speech, runs: "[T]he poet's voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail." By the end of his inaudible but "eloquent" speech, voice had thus become the central metaphor of Faulkner's "message," both as tenor and as vehicle.

I shall begin by examining a few of the contexts in which one finds the highly idiosyncratic word "puny" used, almost always by the narrator, in Faulkner's fiction.

One of the earliest occurrences of the word is in "Death Drag," where the voice described is still anonymous, as if being "puny" was just the effect of a fascination with the airplanes: "We looked back at the airplane. It was high, coming back toward us; some one cried out suddenly, his voice puny and thin: 'There! Out on the wing! See?'" (*DRM*, 90).

However, in *Pylon*, the word is associated with the wasteland of the modern world — in a way that is all the more interesting as it shows

how early (1935) the motifs that make up the "vision" of the Nobel Prize speech appeared in Faulkner's fiction:

> Above the shuffle and murmur of feet in the lobby and above the clash and clatter of crockery in the restaurant the amplified voice still spoke, profound and effortless, as though it were the voice of the steel–and–chromium mausoleum itself talking of creatures imbued with motion though not with life and incomprehensible to the puny crawling painwebbed globe, incapable of suffering, wombed and born complete and instantaneous, cunning intricate and deadly, from out some blind iron batcave of the earth's prime foundation ... (*P*, 25)

If one replaces the crockery by the metallic weapons of *A Fable*, and if one observes that the metal imagery pervades the whole passage ("the steel–and–chromium mausoleum," "some blind iron batcave"), one will find that the apocalyptic "vision" of both Faulkner in the Nobel Prize speech and the old general in *A Fable* was already present in *Pylon* — which is no real surprise, as this vastly underestimated novel can well be described as the concentration of all of Faulkner's fantasies.

In passing, I would like to point out how this illustrates what Malraux said, in his preface to *Sanctuary*, as early as 1933:

> The tragic poet expresses what fascinates him, but to change its nature: for, by expressing it with other elements, he makes the object enter the relative universe of things he has conceived and dominated. He does not defend himself against anguish by expressing it, but by expressing something else with it, by bringing it back into the universe. The deepest form of fascination, that of the artist, derives its strength from being both the horror and the possibility of conceiving the horror.[3]

What I am suggesting, in order to avoid generalities on voice and be as specific as one can about Faulkner's use of it as a recurrent motif, is that we should not dissociate voice from the phenomenon of fascination, and therefore — according to Malraux — from the possibility of "conceiving the horror."

In *Sartoris* can be read one of the very few enunciations of the word "puny" by a character, in this case Horace Benbow, who tells his sister Narcissa: "You forget that lying is a struggle for survival ... little puny man's way of dragging circumstance about to fit his preconception of himself as a figure in the world. Revenge on the sinister gods" (*SAR*, 198). In "Lion" (1935), Quentin Compson, the narrator, addresses himself as "*just a puny assortment of bones and meat*" (*US*, 192). In *Go Down, Moses*, where one can find Faulkner's orchestration of the relationship between man and the wilderness on the grandest scale, the word "puny" is repeatedly associated with man's attempt at leaving a mark on nature. At

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[3] *Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Robert Penn Warren (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), 274.

the beginning of "The Bear," the first time Ike is taken to the wilderness, the surrey is described as "moving through the skeleton stalks of cotton and corn in the last of open country, the last trace of man's puny gnawing at the immemorial flank" (*GDM*, 195). Again in "Delta Autumn," though in poignant retrospect this time: "[T]he road they now followed once more the ancient pathway of bear and deer, the diminishing fields they now passed once more scooped punily and terrifically by axe and saw and mule–drawn plow from the wilderness flank, out of the brooding and immemorial tangle ..." (*GDM*, 341–2). A little further: "He could almost see it, tremendous, primeval, looming, musing downward upon this puny evanescent clutter of human sojourn which after a single week would vanish ..." (*GDM*, 353). The word can also be found in the first narrative section of *Requiem for a Nun*, immediately before Pettigrew is introduced; this is the meeting between "the wild men," the Indians, and the whites who "sweated and cursed among the bordering thickets of their punily–clawed foothold" (*RN*, 19). In other words, there are two possible contexts for the word "puny," and it is their relationship which is of interest here: it either describes a voice, or — more often in the later work — it gives an idea of the measure of civilization against nature — or yet, as in *Sartoris*, the measure of man against circumstance, or even against "the sinister gods." In both cases, the word is associated with something diminutive, and therefore somewhat foolish, ludicrous, or even absurd: preposterous, in short. Something like the fyce in "The Bear": "... a mongrel, of the sort called fyce by negroes, a ratter, itself not much bigger than a rat and possessing that sort of courage which had long since stopped being bravery and had become foolhardiness" (*GDM*, 211).

It seems to me that this is what fascinates Faulkner: being puny as an objective correlative of "a passion for unfact." In other words, one should quite logically relate the existence of puny to the essence of idealism. "Puny," one might say, is an "effect" of the ideal in the sense given to the word "effect" by Roland Barthes, i.e. the perfectly contrived production of an illusion. In yet other words, what "puny" is about seems to be what I for one would call the potency of impotence. The way in which Popeye's very first appearance on the stage is described in "The Big Shot" is a good case in point:

> — a slight man with a dead face and dead black hair and eyes and a delicate hooked little nose and no chin, crouching snarling behind the neat blue automatic. He was a little, dead–looking bird in a tight black suit like a vaudeville actor of twenty years ago, with a savage falsetto voice like a choir–boy, and he was considered quite a personage in his own social and professional circles. (*US*, 504)

The same remarks can be made about the many variations on the motif of

voice which we find in Faulkner's work, including all the sounds that evoke voice. Perhaps the most memorable of these sounds is the bird song which one can hear in the initial scene of *Sanctuary*: "Somewhere, hidden and secret yet nearby, a bird sang three notes and ceased ... Behind him the bird sang again, three bars in monotonous repetition: a sound meaningless and profound out of a suspirant and peaceful following silence which seemed to isolate the spot" (*S*, 1–2).

The bird–song itself may be described as "idiotic" — which is exactly what it is called at the beginning of *A Fable*, when the corporal can hear "still above the bird's idiotic reiteration the lorries creeping secretly and steadily through the darkness" (*FAB*, 82). Two of Faulkner's favorite *topoi* can be found in this passage: the Grecian urn, and the sound hovering over it, portentous and yet impersonal, perhaps portentous because impersonal.

Now this may well be the key to our understanding of the part played by voice in Faulkner's fiction, and by the innumerable variations upon the motif. To put it briefly, Faulkner seems to use it in order to embody the disembodied. He began by calling these voices, human and otherwise, "unemphatic," as he writes of the singing of pigeons and doves at the end of *Soldiers' Pay*; then came the word "inflexionless," as in *Sanctuary*; and, last, the word "idiotic," as in *A Fable*.

In fact, Faulkner's fascination with voice can be felt from the very first page of *Sartoris*, where, by showing the reader the process of the telling, he gives him what amounts to a "program" (in the sense currently used in computer science) of fiction:

> Freed as he was of time and flesh, he was a far more palpable presence than either of the two old men who sat shouting periodically into one another's deafness while the business of the bank went forward in the next room and people in the adjoining stores on either side listened to the indistinguishable uproar of their voices coming through the walls. He was far more palpable than the two old men cemented by a common deafness to a dead period and so drawn thin by the slow attenuation of days ... (*SAR*, 1).

The paradox of two deaf old men e–voking the presence of another one who, though long dead, seems to be "far more palpable" than they are, is of the very stuff of fiction–as–monument.[4]

There is even a hint at ventriloquism in *Light in August*, when Mrs. Hines comes to Hightower to tell her part of the story of Joe Christmas:

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[4] See Stephen Ross, "The Monumental in Faulkner's Sense of History," *Faulkner and History*, ed. Javier Coy and Michel Gresset (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 1986), 51–62; see also his "Rev. Shegog's Powerful Voice," *The Faulkner Journal*, 1 (Fall, 1985), 8–16.

> She speaks in the same dead, level tone: the two voices in monotonous strophe and antistrophe: two bodiless voices recounting something performed in a region without dimension by people without blood. ... Then she begins to speak again, without moving, almost without lip movement, as if she were a puppet and the voice that of a ventriloquist in the next room. (*LA*, 355; 359)

But of course the "apotheosis" — or the "mausoleum"? — of voice occurs in *Absalom, Absalom!*, beginning with Quentin Compson's description of himself as "a hall of voices," going through what is probably the most extraordinary effect of echoing duplication in the history of literature: "two, four, now two again, according to Quentin and Shreve, the two the four the two still talking" — Henry Sutpen being finally evoked, by what Robert Knox has so aptly called "the blended voice," as now speaking with a voice which is "*not even the exhalation, it is the suffused and suffocating inbreath itself*" (*AA*, 357).

The individual voice is thus an asymptote, as it tends to become the objective correlative of the ideal impersonality of art: it is sourceless, bloodless, dimensionless, disembodied, impalpable, etc. This seems to go far in explaining the somewhat surprising image Faulkner used for Cowley in order to explain and justify the tone of what he then called the "genealogy" of the Compson family: "In fact the purpose of this genealogy is to give a sort of bloodless bibliophile's point of view. I was a sort of Garter King–at–Arms, heatless, not very moved, cleaning up 'Compson' before going on to the next 'C–o' or 'C–r'." It also helps to explain why, a few years later, he (otherwise naively) wished he "had had enough sense to see ahead thirty years ago and, like some of the Elizabethans, not signed them [his books]."[5]

Is this also the reason why Faulkner chose to end so many of his novels with a vocal utterance? *Mosquitoes, Light in August, Absalom, Absalom!, The Wild Palms, The Hamlet, Go Down, Moses, Intruder in the Dust, Knight's Gambit, A Fable* and *The Reivers* all end on a final replication by one of the characters.

However, the case of *Soldiers' Pay, Sartoris* and *Sanctuary* is, in a way, even more interesting, as the three of them end on a musical "dying fall": the Negroes chanting in *Soldiers' Pay*, Narcissa playing the piano in *Sartoris*, and the celebrated "waves of music" played by "the dying brasses" of the band in the Luxembourg Gardens in *Sanctuary*. Even *As I Lay Dying* can be considered as ending on the promise of mail–order music being played on the new Mrs. Bundren's celebrated "graphophone."[6]

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[5] Malcolm Cowley, *The Faulkner–Cowley File* (New York: Viking, 1966), 44, 126; *SL*, 206, 285.

[6] See John T. Matthews, "Faulkner and the Reproduction of History," *Faulkner and History*, 63–76.

According to Joseph Blotner (I am quoting from an interview with him in 1967), "Faulkner never was a real connoisseur in music, but his wife and niece would play piano for him, and he allowed a radio in the house by the time of Jill's graduation." This was confirmed to me by Mrs. Faulkner herself when I interviewed her, also in 1967. But, of course, the truth of these endings must be sought in the esthetics of symbolism more than anywhere else. The best proof is given by two novels which do not end in music at all, and yet have the same "dying fall" effect as if they did. One of them is *The Sound and the Fury*, with Benjy's voice roaring "above" "post and tree, window and doorway, and signboard, each in its ordered place" — much in the same way as the bird's "idiotic reiteration" above the lorries creeping slowly in *A Fable*. Another, even more symbolic ending is the ending of *The Unvanquished*, with "the single sprig" of verbena "filling the room, the dusk, the evening with that odor which she said you could smell alone above the smell of horses" (*U*, 293).

From this point of view, however, the most interesting ending must be that of the third narrative section of *Requiem for a Nun: "Listen, stranger. This was myself; this was I"* (*RN*, 262). There is no doubt that in the story of Cecilia Farmer, Faulkner found the perfect, seamless symbol of voice disembodied to the point of surviving only in a graph — and a hard, imperishable, in other words "inexhaustible" graph at that.

Against the individual voice, does Faulkner set the voice of the multitude? Very seldom indeed: one looks in vain for evocations of the voice of the crowd either in *Intruder in the Dust* or in *A Fable*. What one finds instead is the familiar words like "seething," "moiling," etc. — which, unless I am wrong, do not evoke voice, nor sound, but movement — the return of an intensely visual fascination. For instance, as Hightower is dying, literally or metaphorically, he sees

> a halo ... full of faces. The faces are not shaped with suffering, not shaped with anything: not horror, pain, not even reproach. They are peaceful, as though they have escaped into an apotheosis; his own is among them. In fact, they all look a little alike, composite of all the faces which he has ever seen. (*LA*, 465)

A well–known passage in *Intruder in the Dust* is even more to the point here: the mob is described as having "— not faces but a Face: not even ravening nor uninsatiate but just in motion, insensate, vacant of thought or even passion: an Expression significantless and without past ..." (*ID*, 182).

Paradoxically, what best evokes a collective voice in Faulkner's fiction is not the lynching mob in *Intruder in the Dust*, which is like a voiceless face, nor the humble crowd in *A Fable* ("The mass made no sound," *FAB*, 51), but something nondescript, hybrid, neither human nor inhuman — something, however, which partakes in the "sourcelessness" of the bird–

song: this, it seems to me, is what is conveyed in the vexing word "myriad" (perhaps the arch–Faulknerian word) as in *Soldiers' Pay*, "the hushed myriad life of night things" (*SP*, 275), or in "Delta Autumn," when one reads about old Isaac McCaslin: "He lay on his back, his eyes closed, his breathing quiet and peaceful as a child's, listening to it — that silence which was never silence but was myriad" (*GDM*, 353).

There seems to be no doubt left: the one way to fight (or at least counteract) the hopeless immanence of visual fascination in Faulkner's fiction is through voice. This is also to say that voice alone can be transcendent — which is clearly the message left by both Cecilia Farmer at the end of "The Jail" in *Requiem for a Nun*[7] and by William Faulkner at the end of his Nobel Prize speech. Here is another example, once more taken from the beginning of *A Fable*:

> Then the sergeant–major shouted. It was not a command, because the troop did not stir. It sounded like nothing whatever, in fact: unintelligible: a thin forlorn cry hanging for a fading instant in the air like one of the faint, sourceless, musical cries of the high invisible larks now filling the sky above the city. (*FAB*, 5)

One may even go one step farther — as I have tried to do in a study with two alternative titles, "The 'God' of Faulkner's Fiction"[8] or "The Metaphor of the Subject"[9] (which, to me, are one and the same thing). There was one and only one way to end the central nightmare of Faulkner's *inferno*: the eternal, ubiquitous presence of a lidless Eye which doomed every overt gaze to become a covert glance. Thus, both in "Nympholepsy" and in *The Sound and the Fury*, the "curse" of the young male consists in seeing desire, as expressed by the look he casts on a girl, "become swinish," as Faulkner writes in "Nympholepsy,"[10] or hearing the word "sister" associated with the word "bitch," as in *The Sound and the Fury* (*SF*, 180).

This "vision" of the lidless Eye is exactly the vision Hightower has in chapter XX of *Light in August*:

> He sees the faces which surround him mirror astonishment, puzzlement, then outrage, then fear, as if they looked beyond his wild antics and saw behind him and looking down upon him, in his turn unaware, *the final and supreme Face Itself, cold, terrible because of Its omniscient detachment*. (*LA*, 462–3; my emphasis)

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7 See the set of articles devoted to this novel in *Recherches Anglaises et Américaines* (Strasbourg), 13 (1980), 3–108.

8 In *Faulkner and Idealism*, ed. Michel Gresset and Patrick Samway, S.J. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1983), 51–70.

9 This is chapter XIV of my *Fascination: Faulkner's Early Fiction*, to be published by Duke University Press, 1988.

10 "Nympholepsy," *Faulkner: A Miscellany*, ed. J.B. Meriwether (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1974), 150.

This one and only way is to make God (or the Subject, capital 'S') close His Eye, and this can only be achieved through the use either of Sound — if not of Music — as in *Light in August*, or better still, of the Word — through Voice. An example of the first can be found at the end of the scene describing the death of Joe Christmas:

> But the man on the floor had not moved. He just lay there, with his eyes open and empty of everything save consciousness, and with something, a shadow, about his mouth. For a long moment he looked up at them with peaceful and unfathomable and unbearable eyes ... Again from the town, deadened a little by the walls, the scream of the siren mounted toward its unbelievable crescendo, passing out of the realm of hearing. (*LA*, 439–40)

As for the second case, the best possible example lies in *The Sound and the Fury*:

> The visitor was *undersized*, in a shabby alpaca coat. He had a wizened black face *like a small, aged monkey*. And all the while that the choir sang again and while the six children rose and sang in thin, frightened, tuneless whispers, they watched the *insignificant* looking man sitting *dwarfed and* countrified by the minister's imposing bulk, with something like consternation. (*SF*, 293; my emphasis)

Indeed, the preaching scene at the end of *The Sound and the Fury* is the best possible illustration of what I have tried to say.

> His voice was level and cold. It sounded too big to have come from him and they listened at first through curiosity, as they would have to a monkey talking. They began to watch him as they would a man on a tight rope. They even forgot the *insignificant* appearance in the virtuosity with which he ran and poised and swooped upon the cold *inflectionless wire of his voice*, so that at last, when with a sort of swooping glide he came to rest again beside the reading desk with one arm resting upon it at shoulder height and his monkey body as reft of all motion as a mummy or an *emptied vessel*, the congregation sighed as if it waked from a collective dream and moved a little in its seats. (*SF*, 293–94; my emphasis)

In my perspective, it is not only "the barriers of individual isolation"[11] which are broken down here. Much more is at stake — no less than the placating of the Faulknerian avatar of the God of Wrath, the circumvention of the evil eye of the writer's worst fantasy.

Like Cecilia Farmer in *Requiem for a Nun* and like William Faulkner himself in his Nobel Prize speech, Reverend Shegog indeed "surrenders his identity."[12] But what needs to be stressed here is the link with the other structures of Faulkner's imagination. With him, transcendence is embodied in a disembodied Voice, and it is this Voice alone which allows him to

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[11] André Bleikasten, *The Most Splendid Failure: Faulkner's* The Sound and the Fury (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), 197.

[12] Bleikasten, 201.

counter the searing effects of fascination. It is through voice indeed that the writer gains his "right to dream" (*LG*, 253).

Kenzaburo Ohashi (Yokohama)

Telling Against Writing: On a Transition in Faulkner's Style

In his interview with Jean Stein vanden Heuvel which appeared in *The Paris Review* in Spring 1956, Faulkner talked about an important aspect of his attitude toward his métier as a writer:

> I would say that music is the easiest means in which to express, since it came first in man's experience and history. But since words are my talent, I must try to express clumsily in words what the pure music would have done better. That is, music would express better and simpler, but I prefer to use words as I prefer to read rather than listen. I prefer silence to sound, and the image produced by words occurs in silence. That is, the thunder and the music of the prose take place in silence. (*LG*, 248)

When he says, "since words are my talent, I must try to express clumsily in words what the pure music would have done better," we can assume that he has in mind the "writing" he has to do as a *writer*, and the difficulty he faces in attempting to create *literary* works "by words" that will move the reader spontaneously — like music. He had earlier confessed the same difficulty to Loïc Bouvard, a young French graduate student who interviewed him at the Princeton Inn on November 30, 1952. Faulkner avowed that the artist had to communicate his message, but he was pessimistic about the possibility of such a communication with the outside world. Faulkner believed he himself might "end up in some kind of self–communion — a silence — faced with the certainty that [he could] no longer be understood." Sometimes he thought of giving up his métier as Rimbaud had done, yet he also felt he would "keep on writing" as long as he lived (*LG*, 71).

Faulkner's pessimism about "writing" as the vocation of a writer and his determination to overcome the difficulties it presented in order to create genuine literary works was not a phenomenon new to him at the time of these interviews. It had haunted him almost from the beginning of his literary career. In *The Marble Faun* (1924), his early long poem, for example, the faun, who as a piece of cold marble is "a sad, bound prisoner" (*MF & GB*, 51), is deprived not only of its freedom of body and mind as a living creature, but also of its means of communication, of communion with nature, perhaps even of its love toward nymphs. Yet the

faun tries to sing of his passion in words heavily charged with sadness, even slipping out of the marble body like a phantom and wandering over the "fecund" earth to appease his yearning desire. Likewise, Donald Mahon of *Soldiers' Pay* is a living corpse, unable to communicate with other people, yet aspiring "per ardua ad astra" (*SP*, 293). Each of these characters in Faulkner's early works may be seen as a metaphor for the difficulty of "writing" as the vocation of a writer and for Faulkner's wish to overcome it.

Benjy Compson of *The Sound and the Fury*, an idiot, lacks almost every means of communication with others. Yet his attempts to talk to Caddy (as a small boy) and the little schoolgirls (as an adolescent) certainly symbolize the same human anguish and the same metaphorical connotation indicated in Faulkner's early works. Benjy has silence forced on him; his voice that "tries to tell" is always "hushed," even by Dilsey, and he is finally reduced to "bellowing," to "agony eyeless, tongueless; just sound" (*SF*, 320).

The writer himself also has silence forced on him. He is deeply conscious of this force, yet continues "trying to tell," not simply in conventional literary language, but in an attempt to reproduce some *inner* "thunder and music" to which he listens in his imagination while writing.

This process is as yet not exactly one of "telling," although the writer does try to tell, like Benjy in the novel. "Telling," which has been a traditional mode of fiction writing, generally taken for granted by novelists since the genre of the modern novel began to develop, is here stifled, so to speak, not only by the silence which words impose upon the writer, but also by intervening forces which, intensifying the silence, stifle natural human communication in the modern world. By such forces I mean, for example, those standardizing forces in modern civilization — industrialization, urbanization, and mechanization — which, to borrow from Hawthorne, tend to break up "the magnetic chain of humanity." Such forces have, in a way, helped wreck the Compson family and have made it necessary for them to sell Benjy's pasture to a golf club in order to send the suicidal Quentin to Harvard. They are equally capable of stifling a writer's voice. Whatever the forces might be, the "idiocy" of Benjy is a symbol of the ultimate loss of human communication as well as a metaphor for the plight of the writer, who has silence forced upon him by the cold printed letters that reduce writing to mere literary solipsism, even when the writer is still "trying to tell" something to the reader. (I suspect that the early Faulkner's keen interest in graphic arts, which brought forth not only his wonderful handmade booklets but also those beautiful autograph manuscripts, was a kind of resistance against the mechanistic

sway of printing type.)

In this way "writing," which once seemed to be at one with "telling" in the novel,[1] was doomed to lose that unity. "Writing" thus ultimately reaches something like the "degree zero" which Roland Barthes posits as a radical turning point in "writing" because of its utmost neutrality or innocence. And in the Benjy section of *The Sound and the Fury* the "writing" approaches, at its extremity, a mode of presenting images which denote *things* as they are, — and not as emotional "objective correlatives" that will make a literary work an "organic whole." Arthur Kinney correctly points out that "Faulkner's narrative consciousness does not, in the end, *tell* so much as *intimate*,"[2] but the intimation in Faulkner is not simple. One of the most notable examples of such a mode of presenting images that denote "things" appears in two very short scenes from the Benjy section: one in which Caddy and Benjy see a frog on the brick walk of the Compson Place on the day of Damuddy's death, and another in which they just see the spot where the frog had been. The first scene is as follows:

> There was a frog on the brick walk, squatting in the middle of it. Caddy stepped over it and pulled me on.
>
> "Come on, Maury." she said. It still squatted there until Jason poked at it with his toe.
>
> "He'll make a wart on you." Versh said. The frog hopped away.
>
> "Come on, Maury." Caddy said. (*SF*, 22–23)

Faulkner's style here is not exactly "telling" because, although Benjy as a narrator may be said to be "telling" (in spite of his muteness), the images presented — a frog squatting on the walk, Caddy pulling Benjy's hand, Jason poking at the frog, and Versh talking about the wart it may cause — are not harmonized by the telling. Instead, these images are alienated irretrievably from Benjy, the teller, and are just there as remote, indifferent objects, even though they may be alive. The frog may be seen as a *sign* of this alienation. It is just there without any mutual relationship to Benjy and the others, although Benjy is evidently attracted by it. Caddy steps over it, pulling Benjy away from it, and Jason pokes at it with his toe. Finally the frog hops away, and that is that. The second scene, in which Caddy and Benjy are on their way to Versh's house, renders the alienation decisive, with the *absence* of the frog on the same spot. Here we find only a simple reference to the brick walk and Caddy's announcement

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1 I use the term "telling" here in a sense slightly different from Wayne Booth's use of it in his *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961). I contrast it with "writing" — not with "showing" as Booth does. In my sense, as I shall discuss later, "telling" is closely related to the American tradition of "story–telling," which Faulkner always had in mind as an American novelist.

2 Arthur F. Kinney, *Faulkner's Narrative Poetics: Style As Vision* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1978), 118.

that "that frog's gone" (*SF*, 28). Evidently Benjy is looking for the frog, but all he sees is a void, the frog's *absence*, which may be looked upon as a sign of the utmost alienation of outer objects from the subjectivity of Benjy, the teller.

Faulkner's language here attains an absolute simplicity or neutrality, simply denoting the presence of things, of outside objects, and connoting nothing whatever. The frog is *not* an "objective correlative" at all. It does not help weave an organic whole. Rather it destroys the wholeness.

Faulkner's style here, while seemingly resembling a so–called "hard–boiled" style such as Hemingway's, actually differs radically from it. Hemingway's simple style, especially that of his fine short stories, points directly to "the actual things," to "what really happened in action," and in this sense superficially resembles Faulkner's here. But Hemingway also tries to put down in words "the emotion that you experienced" produced by "the actual things."[3] Therefore his style, while pointing toward Barthes' "Writing Degree Zero," is more closely kin to T. S. Eliot's modernistic esthetics of "objective correlatives."

By contrast, Faulkner's style in the Benjy section drains off emotion from the actual things and throws them into utter silence as it does the frog on the brick walk and Benjy himself. Yet, out of this silence, out of this realm of "words" or "writing," there does emerge "the image produced by words" and, above all, "the thunder and the music of the prose." This thunder and music is the voice that comes up from the depths of the world of things and to which the writer listens while writing. The writer, by listening to this voice, can activate his words, and so transform them from mere "writing" into a *story*, a real piece of fiction. The voice has a direction of force (we might call it a "vector" here for the sake of convenience) contrary to that of the silence, and this is the source, the germ of the "telling" in a new, reborn form.

When the writer's narrative consciousness — to borrow the term from Arthur Kinney — takes up this voice, it actually becomes "telling" — and not merely "telling," but "telling" against "writing," so to speak, in which the writer's omniscient narrative consciousness, by uniting itself with that of the point–of-view character, breaks through the fetters of words, of "writing," and recaptures the function of "telling" afresh in the world of fiction. The concept of "telling" in the American novel might be reinforced by the native "storytelling" tradition, to which Faulkner so often referred when talking of his vocation, and which still strongly maintains the colloquial, oral quality that has tended to be totally neglected in the twentieth century novel. This oral quality is not

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[3] Ernest Hemingway, *Death in the Afternoon* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1932), 10.

unrelated to what Roland Barthes has in mind when he discusses the positive side of "Writing Degree Zero."

The relationship of the two opposite vectors in the creative process of fiction — "writing" and "telling," or "silence" and "voice" — is, however, not fixed, but continually oscillating. If, as Barthes says, style "is the private portion of the ritual, [and it] rises up from the writer's myth–laden depths and unfolds beyond his area of control,"[4] such oscillation as arises from the depths of the narrative consciousness of the writer is, indeed, the cause of the variety of style that appears in an individual writer's literary works. In Faulkner's case, the oscillation can be seen throughout his whole creative activity, and through this oscillation the change or transition in his style becomes clear. In *The Sound and the Fury* itself the oscillation can be seen through the different styles of the four sections: the simple style of the Benjy section that presents characters and natural objects as if they were just "things"; the confused style of the Quentin section that represents his mental derangement caused by the relentless forces of history, which may be seen as equivalent to the forces of "things"; the native storytelling style of the Jason section in which "telling" is predominant on the surface; and the seemingly traditional narration of the omniscient narrator of the Dilsey section, in which, however, "telling" actually conflicts violently with "writing" and produces the typical Faulknerian style, as in the description of Dilsey emerging from the door of her cabin into the bleak and chill air of the dawn:

> The gown fell gauntly from her shoulders, across her fallen breasts, then tightened upon her paunch and fell again, ballooning a little above the nether garments which she would remove layer by layer as the spring accomplished and the warm days, in color regal and moribund ... (*SF*, 265)

Here we can easily see the germ of the long, yet condensed sentences of the later Faulkner, in which the whole — character, action, space, and time — is compressed into one: witness, for example, the scene in "Pantaloon in Black" in which Rider lifts up a log of enormous size with his hands and throws it down the incline, or the description of Old Ben and the wilderness at the beginning of "The Bear." The variety of style in *The Sound and the Fury* itself, caused by the conflict between "telling" and "writing," indicates a transition in Faulkner's style that will emerge clearly later.

Before the transition makes itself manifest, however, repetition of the oscillation between the two vectors was necessary in Faulkner's creative activity. In *Sanctuary* and *Light in August*, for example, we see the same

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[4] I am quoting here from *A Barthes Reader*, ed. Susan Sontag (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 32–33.

kind of conflict as in the Dilsey section of *The Sound and the Fury*; only here the conflict comes out openly onto the main stage. I have no space to describe this conflict in detail here, but the prevailing "silence" in *Light in August*, which Alfred Kazin once pointed out as the "stillness" of the novel,[5] tends to stifle the ardent "telling" of the omniscient author and create a tension between those two opposite forces. In this way that unique style of Faulkner's comes into being, in which motion and stillness — kinesis and stasis — mingle with each other, and in which the omniscient author tries to "arrest motion, which is life, by artificial means [i.e. words] and hold it fixed so that 100 years later when a stranger looks at it, it moves again since it is life" (*LG*, 253). See, for example, the presentation of Lena Grove who travels "in identical and anonymous and deliberate wagons as though through a succession of creakwheeled and limpeared avatars, like something moving for ever and without progress across an urn" (*LA*, 5). And if we look at the other side of the same coin, we see that Joe Christmas, stifled by silence and trapped in a vicious circle, is nevertheless compelled to move and express himself and, even when finally destroyed by Percy Grimm, a symbol of the armed society, he soars on the spurt of the released blood "into their memories forever and ever" (*LA*, 440). Joe Christmas soars into the reader's memory too, as an unforgettable vision of a life ruined by the cold mechanism of modern society. All this emerges from the conflict or oscillation between silence and voice, "writing" and "telling," in which the author is caught.

This oscillation reaches its peak in *Absalom, Absalom!* and *The Wild Palms*. In the former the most important point-of-view character, Quentin Compson, is split into "two separate Quentins":

> the Quentin Compson preparing for Harvard in the South, the deep South dead since 1865 and peopled with garrulous outraged baffled ghosts, listening, having to listen, to one of the ghosts which had refused to lie still even longer than most had, telling him about old ghost-times; and the Quentin Compson who was still too young to deserve yet to be a ghost, but nevertheless having to be one for all that, since he was born and bred in the deep South the same as she was — the two separate Quentins now talking to one another in the long silence of notpeople, in notlanguage ... . (*AA*, 9)

Here again silence dominates. "Notpeople" and "notlanguage" symbolize the death of human life and human language, caused by the forces of history which have destroyed "the magnetic chain of humanity" in Southern society. Yet the voice rises in the silence — the garrulous voice of "the ghosts which had refused to lie still." Miss Rosa is such a ghost, and one

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5 Alfred Kazin, "The Stillness of *Light in August*" [1958], reprinted in *William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism*, ed. Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1960), 247–65.

of the Quentins has to listen to her "telling." At the same time the other Quentin is a ghost himself, which means that he, too, has to have his share of the voice; i.e. that he too has to "tell." Indeed, Quentin Compson actually performs this dual role later in his dialogue with Shreve McCannon.

If, as Miss Rosa Coldfield suggests, Quentin had become a writer (instead of killing himself), this could have been interpreted in the sense of the dual role of the author — the "listening" and "telling" which take place in the silence of words and of "writing." In this close relationship between the point–of–view character and the author himself lies the culmination of the conflict between "telling" and "writing" in Faulkner's creative activity. Just as Quentin stands hopelessly ambivalent at the end of the novel, so the author stands torn and riven between the two vectors. The author tries to "tell" to the last — and yet "writing," together with the historical and contemporary circumstances which surround Quentin, the point–of–view character, overwhelms his "telling," also to the last. Thus, the style, split between silence and voice, becomes incantatory, comprising and compressing everything — passion, action, history or time, and space — in itself in a spiral movement of repeated storytelling and a flood of words. Such a style can be seen, for instance, at the beginning of Chapter I in which Miss Rosa's pride, hatred, and yearning of forty–three years are condensed into long sentences; or at the beginning of Chapter II where the past seventy–six years of Sutpen's mystery and secret are compressed into four long sentences which tend to become incantatory with a Shakespearean, alliterative flow of words: "in the same steeple where descendants of the same pigeons strutted and crooned or wheeled in short courses resembling soft fluid paintsmears on the soft summer sky" (*AA*, 31); or in the later chapters where Quentin and Shreve exchange story–telling and listening in what we might call "interior dialogue" rather than "interior monologue."

The controversial structure of *The Wild Palms* as a "double novel" was the next necessary step in the process of transition. The style of "Wild Palms" is essentially so strongly analytical that it becomes, in itself, a metaphor for the self–reflective qualities attributive to "writing," just as the medical operation Harry performs on Charlotte becomes a metaphor for the tragic meaning of the story and its dénouement. The style of "Old Man," on the other hand, shows the opposite extremity — a spontaneous, often violent flow of storytelling just like the violent flood of Old Man, the river. This breaks the fetters of "writing," as the tall convict is thrust out of prison by the flood and forced to help with the delivery of a baby, a new life, in the midst of raging nature. And yet he finally returns to the prison, just as the flow of storytelling will probably have

to return to the fetters of "writing," thus closing a circle or a cycle together with the "Wild Palms" part of the novel.

From this juxtaposition or disruption of the two vectors in Faulkner's style, however, is born a certain serenity in "telling," as if after an exorcism. The deliberate style of storytelling in *The Hamlet* which, from an omniscient point of view, tries to take up everything as it is without falling prey to disruption, is not a retreat to the traditional mode of storytelling on a realistic level, but rather a new mode of telling stories on a mythical or folkloric level. When it strikes a high note, this style gains a certain poetic beauty, sur–realistic in a way, or a kind of grotesque sublimity born from the paradoxical juxtaposition of tragicomedy with black humor, as in the episode of Ike's love for a cow, or in that of the spotted horses. The story of the "Spotted Horses" was originally written far back in Faulkner's early career — in *Father Abraham* of 1926–27 — and we have several versions of it in typescripts at the Alderman Library, University of Virginia. But it seems to have found its final home in *The Hamlet*, owing to the new activation of "telling" in the novel — a good example of the wonderful effect which tenacious repetition finally attains in Faulkner's works.[6] One must agree with Warren Beck when he says that "*The Hamlet* seems an extravaganza improvised more freely in a more detached mood, the author apparently delighting in the realizations of varied subject matters through the flexibilities of his multiform style."[7]

But the serenity of storytelling in Faulkner was neither impeccable nor always safe, because it was inevitably hampered by "writing" and the conflict between "writing" and "telling." That very long sentence in Chapter IV of "The Bear" in *Go Down, Moses* which continues for five pages and once annoyed Malcolm Cowley, an otherwise sympathetic critic of Faulkner, shows that the conflict is still going on. The old ledger of the McCaslin Plantation which young Isaac reads in the commissary thwarts the natural flow of his youthful zeal as well as that of the author's telling in the story; "telling," repressed by "writing," brings forth long and tortuous sentences. And yet here we find realized Faulkner's ideal that he would "try to say it all in one sentence, between one Cap and one period."[8] After the disruption of the two vectors which we

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[6] I have discussed the effect repetition produces in Faulkner's novels in my essay, "Creation Through Repetition or Self–Parody: Some Notes on Faulkner's Imaginative Process," *William Faulkner: Materials, Studies, and Criticism*, II, 2, December 1979, Tokyo: Nan 'undo; also in *Faulkner Studies in Japan*, ed. by Thomas L. McHaney (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1985, 15–27), with special reference to the analogy and difference between Benjy Compson and Ike Snopes.

[7] Warren Beck, *Faulkner* (Madison: The University of Winscoosin Press, 1976), 38.

[8] Malcolm Cowley, *The Faulkner–Cowley File: Letters and Memories, 1944–1962* (New York: Viking, 1966), 14.

have seen in *The Wild Palms*, "telling" never falters completely, but reinforces itself by its own enhanced vigor, even if it does tend to give a visionary or a dreamy quality to Faulkner's stories.

I am well aware that there still remain problems about my argument of a transition in Faulkner's style — such as how to explain and evaluate the shifts of point of view in *The Town*, or Faulkner's only attempt to adopt a dramatic form in *Requiem for a Nun*, or the complex and deliberate way of "telling" in *A Fable*, or the dreamy quality of the storytelling in *The Reivers*. But now, by way of concluding my paper, let me quote a well–known passage from "The Bear," which I feel well illustrates the visionary quality of the serenity finally attained by Faulkner's style of "telling" against "writing." Eleven–year–old Isaac, going into the heart of the woods without gun, compass, or watch, at last sees Old Ben, the apotheosis of the wilderness:

> Then he saw the bear. It did not emerge, appear: it was just there, immobile, fixed in the green and windless noon's hot dappling, not as big as he had dreamed it but as big as he had expected, bigger, dimensionless against the dappled obscurity, looking at him. Then it moved. It crossed the glade without haste, walking for an instant into the sun's full glare and out of it, and stopped again and looked back at him across one shoulder. Then it was gone. It didn't walk into the woods. It faded, sank back into the wilderness without motion as he had watched a fish, a huge old bass, sink back into the dark depths of its pool and vanish without even any movement of its fins. (*GDM*, 209)

Michiko Yoshida (Tokyo)

The Gravity of Silence in Faulkner's Language

When Faulkner is telling a story in a style that the story itself demands, words and expressions are alive with potential associations and reverberations. These reverberations, like the strokes of the bells vibrating in his novels, stay in the reader's mind as he proceeds further into the story. This effect suggests the inexhaustible energy of Faulkner's language and at the same time evokes a vast area of silence from which the words and expressions are produced. The cosmos his language creates is not only an enormous arena of human comedy but also an abode of silence. Faulkner's rhetoric owes its life to his constant awareness of silence as an elemental condition of the universe. As he once said, "I prefer silence to sound, and the image produced by words occurs in silence. That is, the thunder and the music of prose take place in silence" (*LG*, 248).

Faulkner had tried to give expression to silence as well as to images that occur in it from the beginning of his career. In *The Marble Faun* silence is capitalized and described as a beast lurking in the woods. In "The Hill" and "Nympholepsy" the most prominent element of the landscape is silence, which leads a young character to a groping meditation on the meaning of existence. In "Nympholepsy" Faulkner has his character face an undefinable fear of silence, writing: "Man can counterfeit everything except silence. And in this silence he knew fear" (*US*, 333). Later, in Faulkner's mature years, silence strikes deeper roots in the soil of Yoknapatawpha County, and the image of a solitary man walking across a large expanse of land under a silent sky appears in various novels. Silence in his major novels, whether implicitly suggested or directly referred to, breathes through the crevices of language and endows the whole scene with tension.

In *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner uses a variety of devices to make the ubiquitous presence of silence felt as the sorrows and miseries of the Compsons are narrated. Each of the four sections has its own way of evoking the aura of silence according to its own narrative strategy, but behind all of them we can sense the author's meditation on the silent sphere of "notlanguage." My purpose in this paper is to discuss some aspects of how silence is evoked in *The Sound and the Fury* and to show

how it functions in terms of the vision and the meaning of the novel as a whole.

I should like to begin my discussion by quoting a haiku, a Japanese seventeen–syllable poem, in the hope that the sound of water in this tiny poem will help explain Faulkner's sensitivity to silence. The poem goes: "Furuike ya, kawazu tobikomu mizu no oto." A word–for–word translation is, "An old pond, a frog jumps in — the sound of water." A more interpretative translation, found in the Penguin Classic volume entitled *Bashō*, goes: "Breaking the silence / of an ancient pond, / A frog jumped into water — A deep resonance."[1] The explanatory additions to the original, "Breaking the silence" and "A deep resonance," fill an otherwise empty space that the simple syllables of the original have left for the reader's imagination, an important space equivalent to the white background in a haiku painting, which, innocent of the painter's brush, will start breathing with meaning in the eye of an appreciator. The sudden impetuous motion of the frog surprises the reader's auditory imagination, and the momentary splash successfully evokes both the long unbroken stillness that has reigned over the scene until this moment and the restored stillness after the splash, without mentioning the stillness itself. The conjunction of the motion of the frog and the static picture of the pond, the merging of visual and auditory perceptions, guides the reader to the image of the universe contained in the poem.

As the title of the Penguin volume implies, this poem is by Bashō, the greatest haiku poet of the seventeenth century, whose life–long experiments in language wrought revolutionary changes in this form of poetry. What he tried to accomplish is to put in the space of seventeen syllables a whole cosmos to which his soul responds. Strange as it may sound, Faulkner strives toward a similar goal, for understatement is one of his characteristics when he is trying "to say everything in one sentence." He once said, explaining the evocative potentiality of words in description, "every man has a different idea of what's beautiful. And it's best to take the gesture, the shadow of the branch, and let the mind create the tree" (*LG*, 128).

Bashō's sensitivity to the potential eloquence of empty space, both in landscape and understatement, and his genius for evoking silence in the reader's imagination through a small accidental phenomenon, are shared by Faulkner. In the first section of *The Sound and the Fury* a series of such phenomena gradually make us aware of the silence behind Benjy's bellowing and moaning. A red flag flapping in the pasture, a buzzard flapping out of the ditch, and a frog squatting on a brick walk in twilight are

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[1] Bashō, *The Narrow Road to the North and Other Travel Sketches*, trans. Nobuyuki Yuasa (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), 9.

some examples. These happenings are incidentally but clearly reflected on the mirror surface of Benjy's unintelligent consciousness and are reported in a most objective and simple diction. Let us take one example from the opening scene, where Benjy watches the golfers:

> They were hitting little, across the pasture. I went back along the fence to where the flag was. It flapped on bright grass and the trees.
>
> "Come on." Luster said. "We done looked there. They aint no more coming right now. Les go down to the branch and find that quarter before them niggers finds it."
>
> It was red, flapping on the pasture. Then there was a bird slanting and tilting on it. Luster threw. The flag flapped on the bright grass and the trees. I held to the fence. (*SF*, 3–4)

Luster's demand that Benjy shut up follows this passage, so we know that Benjy, who had been moaning before, kept on moaning even while the red flag caught his attention. Yet his attention unwittingly makes the flag a focal point in the empty space from which the golfers are receding and lets the flapping sound speak for the silence that permeates the scene. Here stillness is paradoxically glimpsed in the midst of chaotic sounds.

In *The Sound and the Fury,* where narrative is so often an internal, mute monologue, numerous landscapes assume significant meaning through the characters' wanderings. They are, as it were, windows through which we reach the silent interiors of the characters. Thus an empty space reflected in a character's eyes stays in our mind. We witness how various forms of emptiness will absorb the mute gaze of the Compson children — not only of Benjy but also of Quentin, who also sensitively responds to signs of absence and disappearance, such as empty roads or empty corridors. I should like to consider one instance from an early scene in the second section, where Quentin looks down from his window on Harvard students hurrying for chapel until the slowest one, the terrapin–like figure of Spoade, goes out of sight. While Quentin watches them, his observation of the running students is replaced by a characterization of Spoade, which in turn stirs up the memory of his dialogue with his father on virginity. Thus fed by the tributary streams of consciousness, the present street scene continues to flow on for two paragraphs until no one is left in sight. The passage ends with one simple sentence: "After a while the quad was empty" (*SF*, 79). Silence in the empty quad seems as if it has annihilated all the preceding sounds and motion.

Similar instances are frequently found among the Compson brothers' narratives. The emptiness and silence, which gradually become eloquent, culminate in apocalyptic landscapes in the second and the fourth sections: the bridge Quentin sees "arching slow and high into space, between silence and nothingness" (*SF*, 171) acts as a boundary between two worlds, like

the bridge–like passage of the Nō stage, and epitomizes Quentin's final vision of life and death; while in the fourth section the Negro church at the end of the road like "a painted cardboard set upon the ultimate edge of the flat earth" (*SF*, 292) accentuates a universal silence. The church, suggesting a range of meaning beyond human knowledge, becomes a landmark to which the reader repeatedly returns, only to be baffled in his or her search for a final vision of life that the novel withholds.

But before proceeding to discuss the descriptions of these landscapes and how they are connected to the theme of the novel, I must point out how the pattern of Benjy's narration functions in evoking silence. Benjy's section involves us in a constant conflict between expression and repression, between the idiot's insistent urge to tell and his parents' or his babysitters' irritable demands that he stop. Though the sounds of Benjy's moaning and bellowing themselves never reach our hearing, the high frequency of statements such as "I began to cry" or "I started to cry" and of other characters' repetitions of the desperate plea that he hush are loud enough to evoke these sounds. The pattern of moaning and of reactions of annoyance convinces us of the rightness of Benjy's intuition when he says of Mr. Compson: "The way he looked said Hush" (*SF*, 61). We sympathize with Luster when he complains to Benjy, "Dont you reckon folks gets tired of listening to you all the time" (*SF*, 54).

Paradoxically enough, the crash and collision of voices make us all the more attentive to the sphere beyond this discord, which is suggested through Benjy's depiction of moments of silence. And it is through the omniscient narrator of the final section that Benjy's bellowing and the silence in which it echoes reveal their cosmic scale, in a metaphor of planetary motion. Benjy's bellowing is described as "just sound," but also as "time injustice and sorrow become vocal for an instant by a conjunction of planets" (*SF*, 288) and as "the grave hopeless sound of all voiceless misery under the sun" (*SF*, 316). The impact of these expressions would not be fully appreciated without the reader's experience of the exhaustive conflict of those jarring voices in the preceding sections. The planetary metaphor puts the Compson miseries in a cosmic perspective.

Quentin's turbulent stream of consciousness flows in the midst of a quiet New England spring landscape and frequently falls under the mesmerizing spell of silence, as in the sentence, "The sound of the bees diminished, sustained yet, as though instead of sinking into silence, silence merely increased between us, as water rises" (*SF*, 123). True, his interior monologue, at the slightest provocation, is easily led into the dark current where fragmentary images of past scenes float up and whirl in kaleidoscopic confusion. But it also has its tranquil moments when he is immersed in silence in the present or recalls scenes where peace and seren-

ity abide, such as those in the episodes of Louis Hatcher and of the black man on a mule he meets during his journey home for Christmas vacation. All the moments of silence that have sunk into Quentin's mind are finally externalized toward the end of his wandering in the scene in which a bridge symbolizes a boundary where life and death meet. But before proceeding to discuss this scene, I should like to summarize briefly the episodes of the two black men, because Quentin's descriptions suggest his perceptive response to their attitude toward life, which Quentin knows he could never make his own.

The statue–like man on the mule at a railroad crossing strikes Quentin as having been carved out of the hill itself in the background; he and the mule leave an indelible impression "with that quality about them of shabby and timeless patience, of static serenity" (*SF*, 87) as the train moves out of their sight. Louis Hatcher's clear and mellow voice calling his dogs during his nocturnal hunting is described "as though voice were a part of darkness and silence, coiling out of it, coiling into it again" (*SF*, 115). These black men seem to have internalized the deep silence and the slow breathing of the earth, having made peace with their destiny through the unhurried and slow tempo of their lives.

The tranquility felt in these descriptions provides an interesting contrast to Quentin's own feeling of tranquility when he comes to after his fights with Dalton Ames and Gerald Bland. In his complete humiliation, he finds himself released from the torture and turmoil of his emotions for a while. The tranquil landscape reflected in Quentin's eyes on such occasions implies not so much his reconciliation with life as his remoteness from it. His feelings are associated with the silence and the inertia of death in the lonely sight of the bridge at the end of his long day's wandering. After Quentin gets a black eye and a bloody nose in the fight with Gerald, he goes back to the dormitory to change his blood–stained clothes for his final departure. When his trolley crosses the river he looks at the bridge on which he stood earlier that day and says: "We crossed the river. The bridge, that is, arching slow and high into space, between silence and nothingness where lights — yellow and red and green — trembled in the clear air, repeating themselves" (*SF*, 171). The phrase "between silence and nothingness" makes the bridge stand out in surrealistic relief, as if it were a mirage–like projection from another dimension. The components of the scene are a bridge, lights, and silence, phenomena that have been repeatedly observed in the crucial moments of Quentin's experience and mutely impressed on his mind. It seems that not only all the previous memories of bridges in Quentin's monologue are superimposed on this bridge but also all the previous images of lights and street lamps seen in his lonely hours. Each word that composes this spectacle has acquired its

wealth of associations through the long course of the section's stream of consciousness. Though every word except "nothingness" has its history of meanings and nuances before its occurrence in this passage, a few examples concerning the bridge will enable us to see how it suggests an image of the end of this world and a passage to the unknown beyond, just as the painted cardboard–like Negro church at Easter in the final section makes the whole scene look like a landscape at the earth's edge.

The nightscape recalls the occasion in the morning when Quentin first sees the bridge. He gets off the trolley and walks to it:

> The bridge was open to let a schooner through. She was in tow, the tug nudging along under her quarter, trailing smoke, but the ship herself was like she was moving without visible means. ... The ship went through the bridge, moving under bare poles like a ghost in broad day, with three gulls hovering above the stern like toys on invisible wires. (*SF*, 89–90)

The metaphor of a ghost in broad daylight insinuatingly guides our imagination, and the bridge through which the ghost–like schooner vanishes becomes subconsciously associated with a boundary between two worlds. In addition, the later description of the tug boat coming back alone provokes speculation as to where the ship has gone. Quentin, leaning against the rail, minutely observes phenomena occurring in the water, such as his flat shadow, and the empty float swinging to the echo of the passage of the boat, and as he gazes on the half–submerged debris, this not only leads Quentin's fancy to the image of his own death but also recalls in our mind the metaphor of debris on a stream used to describe the students running for chapel.

Among several other bridges that mark the map of Quentin's wandering and the flow of his consciousness are the one under the edge of which he hides the flat–irons and the one where he humiliates himself in his quixotic confrontation with Dalton Ames. A dramatic anticipation of death, a sense of humiliation, and a nihilistic tranquility converge in Quentin's view of the last bridge and make those yellow and red and green lights trembling in the dark evoke our memories of all the lights the narrator contemplated, alone in the dark, despairing of either protecting his sister's virginity or of having his fiction of incest deny the fact of her defloration. Finally, the expression "between silence and nothingness" suggests that in his quiet recognition of the devastating meaninglessness of all his struggles with time and nature, Quentin feels the total weight of the cosmic silence which no language can counterfeit.

It must be pointed out that the image of a bridge as a metaphorical boundary between life and death has its origin in one of the earliest memories of the Compson children. In Benjy's and Quentin's sections, the Compson children are heard talking about Nancy's bones in the ditch and

are seen looking down into the obscurity of the ditch with fear and curiosity. Going to the ditch to see Nancy's bones is their earliest contact with death and its mystery. This image of the children bending over the silent crevice implicitly overlaps with the figure of Quentin leaning on the bridge and picturing to himself his own bones on the sandy bottom of the river, and it even anticipates the figure of Jason, his brother, looking down at his father's coffin in the grave and hearing the slapping sound of the dirt thrown upon it.

The significance of the bridge scene as a dramatic focal point of Quentin's sensibility is surprisingly similar to that of *hashigakari*, the bridge–like extension of the Nō stage which is attached to the back of the main stage at an oblique angle. At the end of the extension is the lift–curtain through which the performers enter and exit. *Hashigakari* often symbolizes a boundary between two worlds; it is a vital performing area for the main actor to present the tension and the dilemma of his character, whose heart and consciousness are on different sides of the boundary. The slightest change in a posture otherwise immobile, or the actor's eternally protracted slow motion in highly stylized action, when combined with much traditional rhetoric, will become alive with the emotions that this bridge–like passage symbolizes; and it is at such a crucial moment that the spectator sees a cosmic vision of life and eternity loom up. When the actor finally exits through the lift–curtain, it is understood that he vanishes into the world beyond.

It often happens in Faulkner's novels that a presentation of an enigmatic landscape arrests the reader's attention but refuses to reveal what it silently suggests. Though the enigmatic view of a Negro church in the fourth section strongly impresses us, it has received little discussion, while Reverend Shegog's Easter sermon has been fully discussed. But Dilsey's religious vision of the beginning and the end at the close of the sermon will not be understood appropriately unless we pay careful attention to the description of the church as well.

After having observed the catastrophic showdown of the "Compson devilment" and Dilsey's struggle to keep family life going, we witness her walking toward church in the company of Benjy, Luster, and Frony. The omniscient eye of the narrator follows her figure as the group moves through a street filled with white people on their way to Easter service and enters a dirt road with black people's cabins on both sides. The description of the shabby cabins and the desolate look of their front yards that even the spring season has failed to brighten not only adds to the grim atmosphere created earlier in the morning but also provides a strange contrast to the colorful Easter apparel of the black people who emerge from the cabins to form a ceremonious procession. Then the church comes

into sight:

> The road rose again, to a scene like a painted backdrop. Notched into a cut of red clay crowned with oaks the road appeared to stop short off, like a cut ribbon. Beside it a weathered church lifted its crazy steeple like a painted church, and the whole scene was as flat and without perspective as a painted cardboard set upon the ultimate edge of the flat earth, against the windy sunlight of space and April and a midmorning filled with bells. Toward the church they thronged with slow sabbath deliberation ... (*SF*, 292).

The description creates a feeling of disquiet, as if we were standing on a nightmarish precipice in camouflage. The bizarre silhouette of the weathered church with its crazy steeple even recalls the figure of the ghost–like schooner with its bare poles, and the lifeless flatness of the church emphasized by the recurrence of the adjective "painted" is also associated with the rigidness of three gulls "hovering above the stern like toys on invisible wires." Expressions such as "like a painted backdrop," "like a painted church" and "as flat and without perspective as a painted cardboard set upon the ultimate edge of the flat earth" produce the paradoxical effect of a spectacle in which solid reality assumes the threatening look of papier–mâché unreality. So instead of giving a feeling of religious peace and comfort, the church evokes a feeling of fear of the unknowable.

The church, like the bridge in Quentin's section, seems to symbolize a boundary between the two worlds. It must be noted that the paradoxical effect of its unreliable and insignificant appearance parallels that of the first sight of Reverend Shegog, the guest preacher, whose shabby appearance disappoints the congregation. When he preaches, his rich voice revives the suffering and the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the heart of the congregation, throwing them into wordless communion with one another and leading them to an ecstasy of catharsis.[2] We see Dilsey sitting bolt upright and crying quietly in the midst of them. Outside the church after the service, among the dispersing congregation, Dilsey continues to weep, saying: "'I've seed de first en de last.'" We are not allowed to know the precise meaning of the words because to her own daughter's question "'First en last whut?'" Dilsey responds with a refusal to explain, saying "'Never you mind'" (*SF*, 279). It is as if the great depths of her soul could be silently understood only by one whose sorrows and miseries are as great as hers, because soon after this refusal, Dilsey again flatly declines to satisfy Frony's shallow curiosity as to what is going on in the Compson family that morning: "'Nothin,' Dilsey said. 'You tend to yo business en

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[2] The scene invites an ironical comparison with Mr. Compson's comment remembered by Quentin "[t]hat Christ was not crucified: he was worn away by a minute clicking of little wheels" (*SF*, 77). Also, Jason's savage joke to his mother, "You never resurrected Christ, did you?" (*SF*, 279) , will take on an unexpected implication in this context.

let de white folks tend to deir'n'" (*SF*, 298). The omniscient narrator never once dares to look into the sanctuary of her mind.

Dilsey's withdrawal into silence directs our gaze farther behind her to the sight of the church. And we notice that its "weathered" look and "the crazy steeple lifting" also recall the image of Dilsey presented at the very beginning of the fourth section: her shabby but regal appearance when she stood in the door for a while with her old wrinkled face lifted to the weather and her thin, weathered body described as the indomitable skeleton "rising like a ruin or a landmark above the somnolent and impervious guts" (*SF*, 266). Like the black man and the mule who looked as if they were carved out of the Virginia hill, Dilsey makes a silent landscape live with meaning. The image of Dilsey earlier in the morning toiling back and forth between the kitchen and upstairs shows that it is through silence that her suffering and love are conveyed. Though she is not afraid of pointing out truths to Mrs. Compson and Jason in her simple and honest diction, most of the time she endures in silence. One especially impressive scene is where, from the top of the stairs, Mrs. Compson coldly observes her old servant painfully mounting the steps toward her. Dilsey is going to get Benjy dressed; she believes he is awake because her mistress has summoned her from the kitchen, where she has left a half–prepared breakfast. Mrs. Compson watches Dilsey's slow rheumatic movement for some time before she lets her know that her painful climbing of steps is not needed now; Benjy is not awake. Dilsey's reaction is silence. The sentence "Dilsey said nothing" is repeated twice, and her silence is enacted in the passage that objectively describes how Dilsey reacts to Mrs. Compson's cruelty: her sudden arrest of motion in the posture of climbing the next step, her standing in complete silence "like cows do in the rain" (*SF*, 272) while Mrs. Compson's reproach runs its habitual course, and then her turning around to descend. Silence is eloquently at work in this passage.

Once Dilsey does indeed retort to Jason's rude "Did you hear me?": "'I hears you,' she says, 'All I been hearing, when you in de house. Ef hit aint Quentin er yo maw, hit's Luster en Benjy'" (*SF*, 278). Indeed Dilsey's silence and the noisy demanding voices of the Compsons come to stand in a profound contrast, especially after the church scene where her Christian vision of the world is vitalized.

Dilsey's firm faith and endurance make the look of the church all the more enigmatic, particularly since the description is from the narrator's point of view. What does it try to tell? Does the indomitable aspiration toward heaven expressed in the crazy steeple strike the reader as an outrageously ridiculous barricade from which to fight against death and despair? Or does the painted cardboard–appearance suggest the fictitious nature of religion and man's will to cling to that fiction in order to endure,

like Quentin's will to cling to his fiction of incest? Absorbing the insoluble enigma of Dilsey's "I've seed de first en de last" the church becomes a visual focus for the reader to turn to again and again in his endless search for the final vision which could give order and meaning to the novel as a whole, but which the novel itself withholds.

Dilsey might answer the reader as she answers Caddy's inquiry as to why she should be quiet: "'Never you mind. You'll know in the Lawd's own time'" (*SF*, 25). Faulkner's rhetoric lets this final silence abide in his cosmos, and the gravity of the silence endows his language with its validity.

Myriam Díaz-Diocaretz (Amsterdam)

"Look What He Has Already Done to Me": Modality and Temple Drake

> Only, you have got to be told truthfully beforehand what you must refuse; the gods owe you that — at least a clear picture and a clear choice. *(RN*, 169)

Approaches in linguistics and logic have established a basic distinction for the utterance, between the *dictum* — a representative content referring to the relationship of a predicate with a subject — and a *modus* or *modality*, consisting of an attitude the speaking subject takes in relation to that content.[1] In spite of this clear-cut dichotomy pointing to a text as a unit of language or a unit of discourse respectively, the notion of modality, whether considered as a modalizing feature or a modal structure, is far from being unproblematic.[2] I shall leave the theoretical implications of the different arguments for another occasion, but will argue for a flexible description of modality which offers a ground from which to explore the links between structural forms and novelistic technique, between the choice of a certain type of sentence or series of sentences and the perspective or point of view in a work of fiction. In this context, Roger Fowler has described the term as follows: "Modality covers all those features of discourse which concern a speaker's or writer's attitude to, or commitment to, the value or applicability of the propositional content of the utterance, and concomitantly, his relationship with whoever he directs the speech act to."[3]

Rather than limiting modality to a feature within the sentence, Fowler amplifies the term to be synonymous to discourse, "to refer to the linguistics of personal and interpersonal participation in communicative acts; the (implied) speaker's attitude to his propositional material and to his

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1 Oswald Ducrot and Tzvetan Todorov, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Sciences of Language*, trans. Catherine Porter (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 323.

2 The typologies of modalities, modal verbs, and of different discursive levels for a given utterance (or unit of speech) vary significantly in each approach (linguistics, logic, semiotics) and even according to the language in which the critics work (English, French, Spanish).

3 Roger Fowler, *Linguistics and the Novel* (London: Methuen 1977), 13.

addressee, the kind of speech act he is performing, and where relevant its intended effect on his addressee or audience."[4] Thus, questions, assertions, descriptions, commands, statements, together with the figures of repetition, parallelism and negation may be studied in their direct links with the writer's attitudinal position; also, figures of speech may be viewed on the basis of the same proposition as forms of modality.

Elsewhere, in a study of Faulkner's early (uncollected) short stories, I have stressed the particular evaluating point of view upon which the figuration of woman and women is built.[5] The present essay is intended to continue that exploration, following the major argument that in every discourse there is a strategic consciousness, and that a strategy in verbal communication is the result of the social interrelations existing among speakers and their ideological horizons in the concrete situation of the artistic event. Faulkner's strategic consciousness structuring Temple Drake can be understood as the sum of the different articulations of the same idea around the represented person; I want to suggest that this figure is discursively transformed by the crucial shift determined from the narrator's modal position, the latter being a structure that contains Faulkner's attitude towards his subject.

Set in the framework of discourse relationships between narrator(s) and character(s), the contrasts of *modality* between *Sanctuary* and *Requiem for a Nun* reveal important transformations in the narrative programs articulating the figure(s) of Temple Drake/Mrs. Gowan Stevens. From the virtual to the actual, to the final act of Temple's "having to tell" a certain truth, Faulkner's modal position is identifiable — within the shift from narrative to dramatic viewpoint — in a movement from an internal view in *Sanctuary* to an external perspective in *Requiem for a Nun*. By displacing his structures of modality in the representation of Temple — whose process as heroine is yet unfinished — Faulkner allows the character to judge her own experience, creating in this way a dialogic work in *Requiem for a Nun*.[6]

In *Sanctuary*, the compositional principles and the linguistic constituents that hold together the series of texts on Temple are mainly centered on description through the indirect third person narration. The use of the past tense brings about a temporal distance between the writer/readers and

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4 Fowler, 43.

5 See my essay "Faulkner's Hen–House: Woman as Bounded Text," *Faulkner and Women*, ed. Doreen Fowler and Ann J. Abadie (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1986), 235–69.

6 In the present analysis, the problem of the "open hero" and its relationship with the author's position — in the terms introduced by Bakhtin — will be an underlying subject of inquiry. See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. and ed. Caryl Emerson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).

the events themselves. A high frequency of verbs of action draws our attention to the descriptions of Temple, complemented by a visual perspective that directs the reader's location both towards and away from the young woman.[7] Both *the discourse of the narrator* and *the discourse of the character* fuse at times, and in this particular overlapping the outcome is an internal perspective, expressed through the verbal forms "feeling," "feel," and "thinking": "With her hands lying on her lap, sitting erect, she screamed, tasting the gritty acridity of his fingers while the car slewed squealing in the gravel *feeling her secret blood*" (*S*, 134; my emphasis). Later, in another passage, we are told: "*She was thinking about* half–past–ten–oclock. The hour for dressing for a dance, if you were popular enough not to have to be on time" (*S*, 147; my emphasis). As verbal forms, both "feeling" and "thinking" are *commitment indicators* or *belief qualifiers* and constitute two instances of modality in the traditional sense in linguistics.[8]

Faulkner's inner view of his character constructs an area of privileged knowledge of the states of mind only Temple can experience, but because this privileged knowledge is communicated with various qualifiers that signal distancing, the narrative voice is dual. Expressions such as "looked like," "seemed" present a perspective in which the narrator is displaced (as is the reader) from an inward to an outward knowledge of the character's perception. This subtle movement of viewpoint, fluctuating between involvement and estrangement, interacting from narrator to fictional figure, reveals Faulkner's *identifiable modal position* of hesitancy. On the one hand such hesitancy allows for a closer relationship with Temple's own motivations; on the other, this very involvement restricts the reader's view and decreases the privileged knowledge about the rest of the experiences and events outside those concerning Temple directly. Therefore, in spite of the inner view of the events at the Old Frenchman's Place and at Miss Reba's house, not only is there a partial and fragmentary understanding of the rest of the represented world, but of Temple's knowledge of her own situation as well.

Against this overall background, the proposition "Something is happening to me!" (*S*, 99), modalized differently as a repeated attempt and failure to utter an articulation of truth, is paradigmatic in *Sanctuary*: its meaning is eventually left unrevealed in the novel. The narrator's hesitancy, between closeness and commitment to Temple, constitutes Faulkner's modal position towards her as represented person. As an occasional privileged observer, the narrator mediates between the young woman's experi-

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7 Relevant examples appear in *S*, 132–35, 140–41, 144, 149.

8 Fowler, 43.

ence and her assigned artistic role. This mediation, appearing in varying degrees in other passages in the novel, is foregrounded in chapter XIII as a concluding detachment:

> She could hear silence in a thick rustling as he moved toward her through it, thrusting it aside, and she began to say Something is going to happen to me. She was saying it to the old man with the yellow clots for eyes. "Something is happening to me!" she screamed at him, sitting in his chair in the sun light, his hands crossed on the top of the stick. "I told you it was!" she screamed, voiding the words like hot silent bubbles into the bright silence ... "I told you! I told you all the time!" (*S*, 99)

The different modalities attached to the same proposition "Something is happening to me" create a growing tension at the moment of Temple's awareness of the change from the virtual to the actual development of events. Structured as a privileged observer, the implied author has chosen to give the reader a restricted view of the events, disguised under the internal perspective of Temple's acts of thinking, of perception, and her mental state, as well as her memories.[9] Following the course of events from the virtual to the realized conditions of her being and within the dynamics of a bounded text, the implied author asserts his eventual distance, surrenders the authorial control over his fictional figure. Temple has become more and more ungraspable as a character. This culminates in the final paragraph of the novel that describes her inactivity in the Luxembourg Gardens and contains the expression of authorial estrangement:

> She closed the compact and from beneath her smart new hat *she seemed* to follow with her eyes the waves of music, to dissolve into the dying brasses, across the pool and the opposite semicircle of trees where at sombre intervals the dead tranquil queens in stained marble mused, and on into the sky lying prone and vanquished in the embrace of the season of rain and death. (*S*, 309; my emphasis)

The narrator's hesitancy, producing a partial understanding of the situation surrounding Temple, and the indeterminacy unfolded from "Something is happening to me," both create a discursive field for the author to modalize the represented world in *Sanctuary* with a presupposition implying that *what is happening to her* (passive agent) is what *she is doing* (active agent).

The meaning of "Something is happening to me" is reinstated in *Requiem for a Nun* as a certain truth to be revealed and spoken out, which corresponds to *something that has been done*, or better, something someone did. It is those explicit and important textual gaps that are especially developed and explored in the dramatic text in *Requiem for a Nun*. In

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9 See, for example, *S*, 146–47.

place of the narrating voice, the stage directions will be the textual ground for the implied author to modalize overtly the discursive interaction among the characters; moreover, the *implied reader* becomes the *implied spectator*, and the viewpoint from which the represented world is shown in *Requiem for a Nun* becomes plurivocal through the interpersonal features building up the multiple discourse situations among the *dramatis personae*.

A major underlying transformation Temple Drake undergoes is a result of the distortion of mediation in the modalizing position of the narrator's structures which Faulkner develops and applies both in *tropes and topic* in *Requiem for a Nun*. Many effects result from the change of narration into drama. In *Requiem for a Nun*, while the prologues maintain the structural function of the explicit narrator, the compositional principles in the dramatic part situate narrator and spectator in the same position as observers; this external interpretative position permits the audience to change viewpoints, here on the side of Temple, there on the side of the other characters as well.

Temporal distance between writer/spectator and the represented events is reduced to a minimum, to give room for the spectacle itself to reveal what happens.[10] With the elimination of the authorial gap, the closer rapport between the events and the spectators is reinforced by the function of verbal aspects in relation to the events themselves, that is, in the correlation between tense and time, time and the moment of the utterance, in short, between verbal tense and the time of discourse. The past and perfect tenses in *Sanctuary* were coextensive with the narrative mode. In *Requiem for a Nun* the actual contrast between present and past tense, perfect and imperfect tenses, is underlined by the problematic existence of the past, on the semantic level, and the very question that divides the arguments between Temple and Stevens as to whether the past exists or not. This opposition is both *semantic*, and *aspectual*, and quite relevant also as a dichotomy between *what is accomplished* and *what is not accomplished*, or between the finished and the unfinished. If the past is not dead, then it is unfulfilled, and its traces and effects in the moment of the discourse in the present are then detectable and fully working. Whereas in *Sanctuary* the past tense served the purpose of structuring the temporal angle of the narrator's free indirect style, in *Requiem for a Nun* it becomes a topic in itself, and a co–reference for the events of Temple's youth.

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10 This is evident in *RN*, Act II, ii, 173–93, where the author chooses to present a scene between Pete, Temple, and Nancy as direct dialogues rather than as reported conversations taking place in the past.

In a concurrent manner, the interpretative stance no longer being tempered by the modalities of the narrator, the inner view disappears, yielding to a perspective that is clearly external. Quite evidently, the narrator's viewing position is concentrated on the stage directions. What we might call the explicitly neutral pose, however, is much more complex, because the figure presenting the events (formerly controlled by the voice of the implied author) is now multiplied, as the events are being re–told by each one of the major speakers. Consequently, each one of them assumes a different degree of commitment, and Temple Drake now becomes the teller of her own story; such commitment is encoded by the different intentions of each speaker and by their attitudes towards their major concern or reason to be interacting, and, equally importantly, it is arranged according to the relationships each one has with the corresponding interlocutor. In other words, each character takes a role as narrator, and therefore each assumes a perspective, embedded within a different narrating voice performatively emphasized.

This significant restructuring of perspective around Temple indeed challenges the general co–textual claims and presuppositions made about her as a young woman in *Sanctuary*. The narrator's attitude towards his subject, expressed, for instance, through generic assertions, is now set in the dramatic context, bounded by the discourse not of one but several speaking subjects.[11] Consider, for instance, Temple's own words in *Requiem for a Nun*, Act I, iii: "Dont the philosophers and other gynecologists tell us that women will strike back with any weapon, even their children?" (*RN*, 67). The implied author still underlies the text, of course, but this is here manifested in a non–committal, unobtrusive way. With the dialogues presented in a direct, theatricalized manner, the "minimally interpretative"[12] verbs such as "said," "asked," "replied," are no longer necessary, because they are implicit, and the *intonational material* — exclamations, questions, commands, pauses, interrupted sentences — is foregrounded in place of the reported speech of narrated events. Such a sign of displacement of the narrator in *Requiem for a Nun* fulfills the purpose of freeing — at least in appearance — Temple Drake from the obtrusive and mediating role that framed her in *Sanctuary*. Given the above mentioned contrasts, the implied author's attitude towards Temple is marked linguistically in *Requiem for a Nun* by *modal absences*, which constitutes, in itself, a decisive *artistic structure of the unuttered* in Faulkner's discourse.

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11 On generic assertions and structures of stereotypes about women in Faulkner, see n. 5 above.

12 Fowler, 53.

This modal absence of the narrator is of significance for Temple as represented subject, since modality is transposed to the speech acts themselves inscribed in the play. Here it is relevant to mention that the speech acts structure the dramatic part as expression, and they also cross an important semantic framework represented by the setting of the Courthouse, the lawyer, the witness stand and all correlative discursive fields. The rhetorical indeterminacy in "Something is happening to me," semantically functioning as a gap, and paradigmatic of the act of doing in *Sanctuary,* becomes a central argument in *Requiem for a Nun*, as "something which has happened," and "something which Temple has done." On another level, considering the sentences in which she is referred to in the passive voice, it becomes "that which has been done to her." In more concrete terms, each distinct speech act is oriented towards the search and discovery of a given "truth" in its virtual state, as something *that must be told,* or *which needs to be told,* or which Temple *wants to tell,* or else in its actual state as a "truth" that is known.[13] The polyphonic structure of the dramatic part in *Requiem for a Nun* is largely generated around the different modes in which "truth" is signified.

Told without the intervening voice of the narrator, the "truth" is assigned a variety of *modal values* according to the knowledge about it which the interlocutors have and share. Between prescription — of having to tell the truth — and the necessity — of needing to tell it — the dilemma of each participant is *the very construction of truth*; therefore, each speaker (in opposition to the corresponding interlocutor) provides not only a different version, but a different frame of reference; coalescing with the dictum "to tell the truth" we find the acts of *knowing*, of *understanding*, and of *listening* as requirements that did not exist implicitly in *Sanctuary* but become fundamental in *Requiem for a Nun.* The "truth," as fact, as possibility, and as necessity, builds up a dilemma for and around Temple in *Requiem for a Nun*, which, quite interestingly, is the problem the implied author has in *Sanctuary.* Given Temple's own knowledge of the actual events, the question is what options of that knowledge she must discard, reveal, conceal, and to what extent she can be the instrument of information she wishes Stevens not to know: not what to tell, but how much to tell.

The act of telling — a central proposition that is prolifically modalized throughout the dramatic part — constitutes the medium to construct what each one wants for different purposes; as the "truth" becomes equivalent to Temple Drake, according to Stevens' performative utterance, she is, as a figure, discursively created by those surrounding her. Temple is aware of

13 For a perceptive but brief analysis of this topic, see Noel Polk, *Faulkner's* Requiem for a Nun: *A Critical Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), esp. 127–29.

herself being the very subject for the construction of the "truth." First, she splits her self into Temple Drake (the past) and Mrs. Gowan Stevens (the present), and second, she makes the distinction between the image of Temple presented by Stevens and her own version. The actual representation of the heroine's self–consciousness is at the core of the crucial transformation I have suggested, and it becomes especially evident in the passages in which Temple becomes a *subject of address*; in so doing, the authorial position is radically altered. In Act II, i, we read:

> I mean, I'm trying to tell you about one Temple Drake, and our uncle Gavin is showing you another one. So already you've got two different people begging for the same clemency; if everybody concerned keeps on splitting up into two people, you wont even know who to pardon, will you? (*RN*, 156).

It is inevitable that the construction of truth both fails and succeeds as it is the result of the discursive imaginary universe arising from the information provided by each and by all. The act of telling does not have to follow necessarily the object of truth but merely the purpose of "making known" and "making believe"; this explains Temple's insistence that to save Nancy all they need to do is to lie.

In another domain, the question of credibility also contributes to the discursive field around truth: the very creation of a basis for a commonly accepted truth is being questioned. Stevens' authority as utterer of "truth" is supported by his role as lawyer, by his position as defending voice of Nancy, and above all, in relation to Temple, by his expressed knowledge of that truth, which in turn becomes his power over his nephew's wife. Contrary to that, the credibility suggested through the Governor is not based on knowledge but on his own position of power within the civic organization of society. All these interactive values around truth contribute to the confrontation of Temple with her own selves, and assemble the multiple voices which are now evaluating and judging the woman's past and present. Temple wants to be all that she wants to tell, as Noel Polk has pointed out from a different perspective, and, discursively, she is both subject and viewpoint.

As I have stated elsewhere, Faulkner was mystified by the paradox of determinism and individual free will, both of which he explored in the figure of Temple.[14] In *Requiem for a Nun* the figure herself is allowed to be an active participant in the analysis of the events and the motivations that led her to them, as well as the very questioning of that paradox.

Faulkner refuses to judge Temple overtly in *Requiem for a Nun* and, structurally speaking, he waives any claims to privileged views about her which would betray his own attitude and value judgment towards his

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14 See n. 5 above.

subject. Modality is a useful notion for studying the relationship between the many transformations of the author's attitude towards his material and the making of his artistic world. The dramatic form gives adequate artistic justification to the writer's modal absence, and his new position of being as unprivileged as the audience indeed provides one more example of the fundamental integration of Faulkner's fictional vision and his style.

Mick Gidley (Exeter)

Beyond "Beyond": Aspects of Faulkner's Representation of Death

> Are there many "selves"? If so, which is Me? All together or none? Is the process of living not a continuous *becoming* upon which only death paradoxically confers the immutability of *being*.
> Eduard Goldstücker

The protagonist of "Beyond" (1933),[1] a judge, seems to watch himself die of a heart attack while being examined by Doc Peabody. Escaping the mourning of his black servants, he joins a throng of people on a much–traveled path which goes between busy gates and on through a realm of quiet parks and benches. Some of the figures he meets are strangers, such as the young man in formal wedding dress who waits at the gate for his bride, having apparently been killed on his way to his marriage ceremony; some, like the Judge's old friend Mothershed, a rabid, cursing atheist, are known to him; and some are eminences of the past, including Robert Ingersoll (1833–1899), the prolific nineteenth century American writer and lecturer known during his own lifetime as "the great agnostic." The Judge, who seems to be searching for Howard, his beloved dead son, experiences a series of fractured conversations with these figures, each of whom offers him advice; but the only pointer his hero Ingersoll can give him is to seek the assistance of a woman with a radiant face and her son, a boy with scars suspiciously like those of a crucified Christ and who plays with a pile of dismembered toy Roman soldiers, one of them named Pilate. The woman admonishes him simply to sit and wait for his son to ride by on the pony which had caused his death. But the Judge, at this juncture, wants only "to lie beside" his son, "a wall of dust" between them (*DRM*, 274). He hurries to the cemetery, to his son's grave and his own newly dug burial plot, and then homeward — just in time, apparently, to re–enter his body for the funeral.

"Beyond" is a strange, puzzling tale. Even its bare happenings are ren-

[1] "Beyond" was first published in *Harper's* in 1933 and reprinted in *Doctor Martino and Other Stories* the following year (*DRM*, 259-76).

dered with pointed lack of precision. Its tone is light and it *may* recount merely the half–conscious daydreams of a man about to enter sleep envisaging his own death. Or, like Ambrose Bierce's famous "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," it *may* consist of the thoughts and projected aspirations of a man at the extremity of life before entering death. Or, again, if it *is* a story about "*the* beyond," the hereafter, its meaning is certainly not definite or easily deducible; for example, if the boy is Christ, why is he not an adult, and why is he already scarred? And if the man the Judge takes to be Ingersoll is Ingersoll, why has he not retained the opinions he held in life, like the atheistic Mothershed?

In many respects "Beyond" is reminiscent of some of E.M. Forster's whimsical parables, "The Other Side of the Hedge" (1904), "The Celestial Omnibus" (1908), "The Point of It" (1911) and "Mr. Andrews" (1911), all published in the US during the twenties.[2] Each of these is pervaded by an atmosphere of other–worldliness, or a slipping out of the linear chronology of an earthly time scheme, perhaps into death. In "The Celestial Omnibus," for instance, a young boy takes two bus rides to "Heaven" from the alley across the road from his mundane suburban home in the company of such literary eminences of the past as Sir Thomas Browne. On the second journey they lose his neighbor Mr. Bons, who falls to his actual death because of his lack of faith in the writers he meets on the ride. In "The Point of It" Michael seems to die twice, once as a young man, once as an old man, either without having learnt anything between his "deaths" or unable to communicate what he has learnt — "the point of it" — to those left behind. In "Mr. Andrews" two opposed souls, that of a conventional British Christian and that of a Moslem brigand, travel heavenwards together. On arrival they see "Buddha, and Vishnu, and Allah, and Jehovah, and the Elohim," and indeed, every god that humankind has invented, all equally present and each equally limited. They elect to return to earth and "the world soul," purged of their senses of rivalry.

While a case could be constructed for "Beyond" as a kind of amalgam of inheritances from such stories, *its* didacticism, unlike Forster's, is unclear — or, even, non–existent. The teaching of "The Other Side of the Hedge," for example, proves plain enough. The narrator impulsively decides to scramble through a prickly hedge at the side of the road he is traveling to find himself in a great, verdant meadow; his rescuer and guide then reveals to him that this is the meadow from which human be-

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[2] The first two stories were collected in *The Celestial Omnibus* (1911), issued in the US in 1923, the others in *The Eternal Moment*, which was published in London and New York in 1928. The subsequent quotation is from Forster's *Collected Short Stories* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1954), 169.

ings both leave to start on the road and into which they pass through a gate at the end of the road. In "Beyond," by contrast, despite the fact that the Judge carries with him a text on whose teachings he has relied all his adult life, Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary* — or, perhaps, as we shall see, partly *because* he relies on it — no instruction is given, "the point of it" remains unmade.

If "Beyond" is an allegory, it is a more or less vague one embodying the central religious positions open to humankind — atheism (Mothershed), agnosticism (Ingersoll), and faith (the mother and child). But the Judge is unable to judge between them. On this final night of the story, as on every night during his long life before going off to sleep, in whatever dimension he now lies — wakefulness, sleep or death — he declares, "Gentlemen of the Jury, you may proceed" (*DRM*, 276). It is as if the reader is summoned to jury service, and it is he or she who must proceed. The story itself, like the Judge, abstains from judgment.

This sense of the story — as one which seems to press towards a verdict which is then withheld — is exacerbated when we look "outside" the text, as it were, to the "real life" figures and books so noticeably signposted in it. Thomas Beer — a writer from whom, incidentally, Faulkner once said he had learned a lot — described the historical Robert Ingersoll as

> a lonely figure, roving the cities and dispensing the raw material of the eighteenth century's rationalism with a slab of tobacco in his pocket ... Editors and critics, when he died, found it evasively easy to say of Ingersoll that he had given out nothing new, that his agnosticism ... was a simple derivative from Paine and Voltaire, but ... the profane lawyer was a little heroic, a solitary point of open protest, navigating in a void.[3]

Ingersoll, who died quietly in bed from a sudden heart attack in 1899, was honored by a 1927 biography and a 1929 Centenary Edition of his works that rekindled public awareness of him at about the time the first version of Faulkner's story, "Beyond the Gate," was being composed.[4] Sharon

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[3] Beer, *The Mauve Decade* (New York: Knopf, 1926), 138–39. Faulkner alluded to Beer's book when he captioned William Spratling's caricature of Lyle Saxon "The Mauve Decade in Saint Peter Street" in *Sherwood Anderson & Other Famous Creoles;* reprinted in full in *Texas Quarterly*, 9 (Spring 1966), 41–96. His comment on Beer appears in *FU*, 20. Frederick J. Hoffman discusses Ingersoll's influence during the early decades of this century in *The Twenties* (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1962), 468. Gordon Stein's *Robert G. Ingersoll: A Checklist* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1969) constitutes a useful bibliography of Ingersoll's voluminous output (which encompassed several works on Voltaire and other figures mentioned in "Beyond") and of Ingersoll scholarship, including Cameron Rogers' biography, *Colonel Bob Ingersoll* (1927).

[4] See James B. Meriwether, *The Literary Career of William Faulkner* (Princeton: Princeton University Library, 1961), 81; Hans H. Skei, *William Faulkner: The Short Story Career* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1981), 62–63, and the paper by Hult cited below.

Smith Hult, in the fullest study of "Beyond" to date, has argued that, in several respects, including his tobacco, the Judge is actually modeled on Ingersoll, who, in "The Truth," wrote: "Back of life, of existence, we cannot go — beyond death we cannot see."[5]

Similarly, if like Ingersoll the Judge was "navigating in a void," his guiding star was also Voltaire. Indeed, in the "Beyond the Gate" version of the story Voltaire is as actively sought out in the "beyond," as Ingersoll is in the final version. And when we consult the book the Judge carried, the *Philosophical Dictionary*, we find among its range of ironical and skeptical entries, as in a hall of cracked mirrors, that the item "On Religion" is also "about" religious belief and is set beyond life's portal. It contains a meditation which includes a story of being escorted by a genie — in sleep, daydream or, possibly, death — to see a series of piles of mutilated corpses, the victims of various religious controversies, and then to meet a succession of ancient wise figures, Pythagoras, Socrates, etc. The last of these is unnamed, but unmistakable: "I was astonished to find his feet swelled and bloody, his hands in the same state, his side pierced, and his ribs laid bare by flogging." In Voltaire's story, however, the figure is adult and, says the narrator, his mere nod "filled" him "with consolation."[6] "Beyond," though structured to seem to move towards it, denies the consolation conventionally identified with such iconography.

Let us look more closely at its narrative point of view. The reader is restricted to the past tense and the Judge's own perspective. That is, whether the Judge ultimately merely sleeps or actually dies, the vantage from which the tale is told is well–nigh unattainable. If it *were* told in the first person — like, say Poe's "William Wilson," whose protagonist has already "murdered" himself when he recounts the tale — it would be absolutely impossible. It would be akin to what Dieter Meindl elsewhere in this collection terms "post–mortem narrations," like one of those M.C. Escher pictures of perfectly logical stairs which nevertheless lead

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5 Hult, "William Faulkner's 'Beyond,'" an unpublished paper delivered at the Short Story Conference at the Southern Studies Program, University of South Carolina, in 1974. I am grateful to Hans Skei for supplying me with a copy; the paper includes this and other quotations from Ingersoll.

6 Voltaire, *Philosophical Dictionary*, in *The Works of Voltaire*, with notes by Tobias Smollett, revised and modernized translations by William F. Fleming, 42 vols. (New York: G.R. DuMont, 1901), vol. 13, 73. The publication of Voltaire's works has an extraordinarily complicated history, but it seems that this edition has the same text as that in Faulkner's own library; see Joseph L. Blotner, *William Faulkner's Library – A Catalogue* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1964), 97. In *The Falkners of Mississippi* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967) Murry Falkner included Voltaire in his list of authors read by the Falkner family during his generation's maturation (17), and elsewhere I have argued for the significance of extra–literary texts by Voltaire and others in Faulkner's reading; see, for example, Gidley, "One Continuous Force: Notes on Faulkner's Extra–Literary Reading," *Mississippi Quarterly*, 23 (Summer 1970), 299–314.

nowhere or, somehow, into themselves: absurd creations that can yet be diagrammed. Now, Addie's section of *As I Lay Dying* (1930), a novel written around the same time as "Beyond the Gate," *is* told in the first person from precisely such an impossible vantage point. The words of that book's very title, as others have noted, would in "reality" be syntactically nonsensical or unsayable, in that they would have to be uttered *from* death. It is only in mythological discourse (which, as Carvel Collins revealed, is where the title words originated[7]) or in religious discourse or, of course, in fiction that such things can be said. No wonder that Faulkner himself referred to *As I Lay Dying* as "a tour de force" replete with what he called "tricks" (*FU*, 87).

There are several correspondences between the two texts, and it seems to me that "Beyond," which — despite its use as the title story of a section of *The Collected Stories* (1950) — has provoked very little critical commentary and has usually seemed peripheral to the Faulkner canon,[8] might offer insights into the more complex work. "Beyond" asks us to accept *both* the continuous lying still of a dead or dying body on a bed — a bed in which, it says, the Judge "had first slept alone, which had been his marriage bed, in which his son had been conceived and been born and lain dressed for the coffin" (*DRM*, 259) — *and*, simultaneously, a series of transitions or, in a famous phrase, deaths and entrances. The most obvious of these are: from the Judge's death chamber to the "concussion of life–quick flesh with his own" about "the entrance" (*DRM*, 261) where he encounters the young man who will never now consummate his marriage; from the young man to Mothershed ("Mothershed": meaning orphaned, shed by the mother? or escaping, shedding the mother?); from Mothershed to Ingersoll, to whom the Judge relates the loss of his son, his relationship with his widowed mother, the death of his wife, and his spiritual uncertainty and isolation; from Ingersoll to the mother and child, to whom he also confides the loss of his son; from them to the graveyard; from the cemetery to his own home and, possibly, body; and thence, with the fading light, into sleep or, more likely, death. Several of these transitions echo or reinvoke the rites of passage hinted at in the description of the Judge's bed: sleep, marriage, conception, childbirth, bereavement, widowhood and, of course, death. "Beyond," in other words, is a story full of reverberations or, in visual terms, reflections. The basic structure of

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7 Collins, "The Pairing of *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*," *Princeton University Library Chronicle*, 18 (Spring 1957), 123, claims that the title of *As I Lay Dying* was taken from Sir William Marris' 1925 translation of *The Odyssey*.

8 Very brief comments on "Beyond" appear in, among other places, Michael Millgate, *The Achievement of William Faulkner* (London: Constable, 1966), 274; James Watson, "Short Story Fantasies and the Limits of Modernism," *Faulkner Studies*, 1 (1980), 80–85; and various dissertations devoted to the short stories.

As I Lay Dying, as Olga Vickery discerned long ago, is also a tension between linear progression, a series of transitions, and what she termed the "centrifugal" movement around Addie's still and dying or dead body.[9] Again, the primary rites of passage — from "emptying" oneself "for sleep" (*AILD*, 76) to death — are both paramount events and topics of consideration. Moreover, in *As I Lay Dying* these similar concerns to "Beyond" are multiplied, very precisely, by the multiple perspectives of the novel. Each Bundren endures at least some of them.

And in both texts we are made aware of them not simply as psychological traumas, but also as profound philosophical problems. "I have believed in you," the Judge tells Ingersoll,

> I said, if Truth is to be found by man, this man will be among those who find it. At one time — I was in the throes of that suffering from a still green hurt which causes even an intelligent man to cast about for anything, any straw — I had a foolish conceit ... I thought perhaps there is a hereafter, a way station into nothingness perhaps, where for an instant lesser men might speak face to face with men like you whom they could believe; could hear from such a man's own lips the words: "There is hope," or: "There is nothing." I said to myself, in such a case it will not be Him whom I shall seek; it will be Ingersoll or Paine or Voltaire ... . Give me your word now. Say either of these to me, I will believe. (*DRM*, 266)

The Judge is here stating both his actual psychological condition and his enforced metaphysical position, and he does the same in exacerbated form in the later comment that "there is a certain integral consistency which ... a man must cherish because it alone will ever permit him to die. So what I have been, I am; what I am, I shall be until that instant comes when I am not. And then I shall have never been" (*DRM*, 270). This fusion under pressure of the philosophical and the psychological is akin to R.D. Laing's "ontological insecurity" and its symptoms manifest themselves — as I'm sure I needn't elaborate in too much detail here — in all of the Bundrens.[10] Darl's continuous crisis of identity — always lying "beneath rain on a strange roof" thinking of "home" (*AILD*, 76) — is obvious; Addie's brief section recounts her attempts to define herself and brims with paradoxical reflections on the nature of being; even simple Dewey Dell has experienced a time when she lost a sense of herself: "*I had a*

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[9] See Vickery, *The Novels of William Faulkner: A Critical Interpretation* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, rev. ed., 1964), 50–65.

[10] Relevant readings of the novel include: James M. Mellard, "Faulkner's Philosophical Novel: Ontological Themes in *As I Lay Dying*," *The Personalist*, 48 (Autumn 1967), 509–23; Robert Hemenway, "Enigmas of Being in *As I Lay Dying*," *Modern Fiction Studies*, 16(Summer 1970), 133–46; André Bleikasten, *Faulkner's* As I Lay Dying, rev. ed. trans. Roger Little (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1973), especially 115–33; and François L. Pitavy, "Through Darl's Eyes Darkly: The Vision of the Poet in *As I Lay Dying*," *William Faulkner: Materials, Studies, Criticism*, 4 (July 1982), 37–62.

nightmare once I thought I was awake but I couldn't see and couldn't feel ... and I couldn't think what I was I couldn't think of my name I couldn't even think I am a girl I couldn't even think I" (*AILD*, 115); and even Anse, despite his immense physical and mental laziness, indulges in half-nutty reflections upon man's upright stature, for all the world as if in absurd parody of certain Renaissance ideas on uprightness as a sign of the divine nature of human kind.[11]

As I Lay Dying, in other words, is arguably as full of echoes and reflections as "Beyond" and, again like "Beyond," when we trace some of the novel's intertextual references our sense of reflexivity is not diminished, but increased. The parallelism with Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) — Jewel/Pearl, George Whitfield/Arthur Dimmesdale, etc. — is well-known.[12] Less obvious is that the name of Faulkner's preacher is also reminiscent of the historical Reverend George Whitefield (1714–1770), a histrionic British preacher of great repute — more for his style, it seems, at least to his detractors, than for his substance — who made many journeys through the South, promoted the Great Awakening, became an inflexible Calvinist, and published hundreds of sermons and pamphlets which continued to be circulated at revivalist meetings long after his death. Hawthorne himself mentions Whitefield (and his "fervid eloquence") at least once, in the prefatory sketch to *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846).[13] If Hawthorne took *his* pastor's name from the historical figure — "Whitefield" to "Dimmesdale" is a fitting lexical gambit for him — the maze of distorted mirrors would be complete.

Again, at Virginia Faulkner spoke of Addie's "New England tradition" (*FU*, 112) and whether or not he was confusing her with Joanna Burden of *Light in August* (1932), it is at least feasible that Addie truly does belong in a New England tradition: that of Hawthorne, but also that of the reclusive Emily Dickinson, obsessed with selfhood and godhood. Indeed, the vantage point of Addie's section, which we mentioned earlier, is precisely parallel to that of the persona in such Dickinson poems as "My life closed twice before its close" and "I heard a fly buzz when I died." (There are other interesting parallels: the first poem speaks of deaths in life and of salvation, or the lack of it, as Addie does; in the second poem,

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[11] See Anse's disquisition on roads being made "long ways" and men "up-and-down ways" (*AILD*, 35) and C.A. Patrides, "Renaissance Ideas on Man's Upright Form," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 19 (1958), 256–58.

[12] See, for example, Richard Bridgman, "As Hester Prynne Lay Dying," *English Language Notes*, 2 (June 1965), 294–96, and Kiyoyuki Ono, "Faulkner and History: *As I Lay Dying* and *The Scarlet Letter*," *William Faulkner: Materials, Studies, Criticism*, 7 (April 1985), 18–36.

[13] Hawthorne, *Mosses from an Old Manse* (London: Warne Chandos Classics, 1884), 17. For accessible material on Whitefield see James D. Hart, *The Oxford Companion to American Literature*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 916.

the "death" takes place "between the heaves of storm" and "then the windows failed" just as Addie's last look was from the window; and the buzz of the fly has its analogue in the buzz, not "uncertain" but constant, of Cash's saw).[14]

Faulkner's judgment that *As I Lay Dying* constitutes a "tour de force" is, I think, an apt one. Interestingly, one of the few other works of his to which he applied the expression was "Beyond." He told Ben Wasson that the story was "a tour de force in esoterica."[15] This oxymoronic phrase in itself could hardly be more Faulknerian and, as several commentators have stressed, in the world of *As I Lay Dying* hitherto polar opposites are called into question: humor/horror, sanity/insanity, activity/stillness, sleeping/waking, self/other, etc.[16] The same is true of "Beyond." And the chief such categories called into doubt are the elemental ontological ones of life and death.

One common way of describing the events which occur in *As I Lay Dying* on the way to Jefferson is to see them as *effects* of Addie's attempts to define herself; each member of the family is tied irrevocably to her. The very fact that one person exists qualifies the existence of every other person. Indeed, if the view encapsulated in my epigraph has validity — that is, if the process of living *is* a continuous *becoming* upon which only death paradoxically confers the immutability of *being* — then dead people truly *are*, and as such are potent forces.

Hence my final intertextual reference, to Jules Romains' *The Death of a Nobody*, which was first published in France in 1911 and in English translation in 1912. In both *As I Lay Dying* and *The Death of a Nobody* major characters — Addie and Jacques Godard — are dead but in some sense "live on." Godard lives on first as a force, to bring people together for his funeral, etc., and then as a memory in the consciousnesses of others. Faulkner's book goes a paradoxical step further: as has often been pointed out, Addie lives on in what she made her children *be*; as a force in the Godard sense (the Bundrens are taking her body to Jefferson and certainly

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14 Poems 1732 and 465 in *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas H. Johnson (Boston: Little, Brown, 1960).

15 Faulkner to Wasson [Summer 1933], *SL*, 71–72. Interestingly, it is clear from this letter that the editor of *Harper's* was unsure of the point of "Beyond" — and Faulkner's explanation constitutes little more than a starker retelling of the story's action. In "Wilbur Daniel Steele's Influence on Faulker's Revision of 'Beyond,'" *Mississippi Quarterly*, 34 (Summer 1981), 335–39, Hassell A. Simpson makes a good case for Faulkner having used Steele's story "Can't Cross Jordan by Myself" as a model in trying to improve his own tale's marketability. For discussions of Faulkner's usage of the expression "tour de force," see Joseph W. Reed, *Faulkner's Narrative* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973), especially 260–62.

16 See, for example, William Rossky, "*As I Lay Dying:* The Insane World," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 4 (Spring 1962), 87–95, and the "Introduction" to Bleikasten, *Faulkner's* As I Lay Dying, 3–9.

remember her); and she also "lives," so to speak, as a narrator.

In each book the limitation of consciousness is an important subject for investigation. In a sense, what the unnamed young man at the end of *The Death of a Nobody* thinks is actually *demonstrated* by the action of *As I Lay Dying*:

> As he glanced in the direction of the town, he felt astonished at being shut up in his own personality. It came upon him with irresistible self–evidence that his soul did not exist merely in the place where he was saying "I." "There is nothing compelling it to exist precisely here. Why on earth should I have ever thought there was?"[17]

In *As I Lay Dying*, in the present tense of it, Addie exists *precisely* nowhere, and the clairvoyant Darl would be astonished to be confined to his own body or, in Romains' sense of the word, his own personality. This "supreme lucidity," as he calls it, of Romains' young man leads him to the conclusion that it is "impossible to grasp any truth, except when one isn't trying:"

> He turned toward the city and gave himself up to the influences round him ... "I am on this rampart; I am walking on the grass, I feel it underfoot; I feel that inside my head I am thinking about it all. Well now, if someone were to tell me that at this moment my soul is over there, down in that valley ... it wouldn't strike me as silly, or even as surprising ..." Then it seemed ... that the man they had buried [Godard] both existed and did not exist at one and the same time (Romains, 111–12).

Clearly, though the sense of community in *As I Lay Dying* is not a sustaining one as it is in Romains' novel, there are specific correspondences between the two books: though not in any sense a "positive" motion of the mind, Darl in *his* last monologue actually observes himself being transported to the asylum and, equally emphatically, Addie both "existed and did not exist at one and the same time."

Thus it is that much of what Maurice Natanson, the philosopher, says in his afterword to the Signet edition of *The Death of a Nobody* could equally well be said of *As I Lay Dying*:

> ... it may appear paradoxical that Romains should choose death as a theme for a novel, for it is the life ... of groups that [his theory of] ***unanimism*** celebrates.

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[17] Romains, *The Death of a Nobody*, trans. by Desmond McCarthy and Sidney Waterlow (New York: Signet, 1961), 111. Subsequent page references are to this edition. In his *American Literature, 1919–1932: A Comparative History* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971) John McCormick describes Romains' theory of *unanimism* — "that men in groups participate in collective, as opposed to individual, thought and enter into instinctive community with the 'unanimity'" — and his belief that "the writer can express that intuition of unanimity and, by so doing, aid the individual to integrate himself into the collectivity" (24). McCormick proceeds to assert the influence of unanimism on a variety of writers that Faulk-ner certainly knew, including Anderson, Dos Passos and James Gibbons Huneker.

> The paradox is only apparent. Death, for Romains, is a cohesive force; it brings the lives of men into focus and presents us with the possibility of comprehending the history of consciousness in the world, ranging from its observable features in human action to its most subtle manifestations in memory. In this sense death is a social datum, not primarily a biological fact (Romains, 118).

Doc Peabody, in a famous passage, says much the same, if flatly and cynically, when he pays his last visit to the sick Addie:

> I remember how when I was young I believed death to be a phenomenon of the body; now I know it to be merely a function of the mind — and that of the minds of the ones who suffer the bereavement. The nihilists say it is the end; the fundamentalists the beginning; when in reality it is no more than a single tenant or family moving out of a tenement or a town. (*AILD*, 42–43)

Natanson continues:

> Death occurs within the matrix of the social order, and it occurs not only for the individual but for all those associated in any way with the dead. Just as the individual is intimately related to his fellow men in life, so he is bound to them in death; they become responsible for him, and not only preserve his memory but transmute him in memory into a variety of almost magical forms. In death the person may be even more a member of society than he was in life (Romains, 118).

Yes, the simple fact that one person exists qualifies the existence of every other person with whom he or she comes into "contact." Thus, from person to person, an endless "series" could cover the earth. How terribly doing goes along the earth. Addie thinks of herself as a circle, excluding so much and excluded from so much, but she is ultimately wrong, as is Darl when he thinks of her as the rim of a wheel (*AILD*, 102). It is the opposite which is finally true: she is like each individual human being, a hub from which the spokes radiate.

Several of those of Faulkner's figures who, like the Judge and Addie, front death closest — Quentin in *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), Hightower in *Light in August* (1932), Wilbourne in *The Wild Palms* (1939), even Mink in *The Mansion* (1959) — are his spiritual isolates. Often their thinking processes follow patterns akin to those analyzed elsewhere in this collection by Stephen Ross. And, just as the Judge grieves for Howard, they are acutely conscious of life's rites of passage; indeed, they themselves are often totally bereft. Death as faced by such figures — perhaps even more than it must appear to the rest of humanity — should prove the loneliest, the most intensely *subjective* of experiences. In reading their stories, if in different ways, we are invited to go "beyond" the transition between life and death, and sometimes that very transition is blurred. More important, in this movement the extreme subjectivism expected is actually broken down: a Hightower sees myriad faces, a lowly Mink has intimations of joining the immortals. These figures become part

of the communality or, as Romains would put it, the unanimity of humankind.

Death, as every truism tells us, is unknown territory. It can only be visited in metaphors, in art, and no definitive verdict is possible. The inquiry or case continues until the moment of death. Faulkner's "Beyond" *must* close on the words "Gentlemen of the Jury, you may proceed." Addie is equally non–committal. In one of her cryptic phrases she says, "I knew that living was terrible and that this was the answer to it" — "this" referring perhaps to childbirth or, more likely, to death. Puzzlement and paradox inevitably attend these matters. At various points during her life Gertrude Stein is supposed to have said to Alice Toklas, "If this" — meaning life — "is the question, what is the answer?" As she lay dying she said, "Alice, if this is the answer, what was the question?"

Hans Skei (Oslo)

Inadequacies of Style in Some of William Faulkner's Short Stories

Most characteristic of William Faulkner's short fiction is perhaps its diversity and uneven quality. Most of the stories show a professional craftsman and an imaginative writer who knows his material intimately and commands the means to get a story told the best way he sees for it. But now and then his writing — style as well as narrative — seems awkward, and the rhetorical force of his language does not correspond to, and cannot be seen as the result of, his choice of subject–matter, characters, or theme. In these cases, admittedly few, one is tempted to use the term "inadequate" to describe his style.

Faulkner's own thinking about the rhetoric of fiction, poetics, or stylistics may simply have been that technique charged in and took command from time to time (see *LG*, 244). Yet there is every reason to investigate his narrative strategies and his style. This is so even in the short stories, despite the obvious fact that he did not plan, think, or care as much for the short fictional pieces as he did for the longer works which laid claim to his concentration and energy most of the time. These comments should perhaps be qualified, but broadly speaking, Faulkner's craft and genius of revision and restructuring had an effect on a limited number of his stories, and, obviously, most often on the stories that were re–used in novels.

On the basis of a few stories, I shall discuss Faulkner's rhetoric of fiction in the limited meaning of style, basically and for convenience understood as "manner"; i.e., typical patterns, preferences, repeated idiosyncrasies, a certain kind of narration that may distinguish *his* style in a particular text or be characteristic of his work as a whole. Style cannot be understood or discussed as if it were a separate or autonomous aspect of a literary text, and much of what we may discuss as Faulkner's style is not characteristic of him alone. Accordingly, any discussion of Faulkner's linguistic practice will include elements which must be seen as general properties of literature; i.e., devices that transform ordinary language into literary language.[1]

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[1] This does not imply that I necessarily see "literary language" as different from "ordinary

My approach to the extremely problematic concept of style or stylistics is pragmatic, in the sense that I take it for granted that an analysis of Faulkner's style is preferable to theoretical stylistics or even metastylistics. Yet although "style" must be understood as an open class concept,[2] it should be made clear that my emphasis will be on descriptive and rhetorical stylistics, studied in the hope of better understanding the text's ultimate message, theme, or meaning. I do not propose that stylistic differences simply correspond to differences in meaning, but that style in a general sense contributes to the overall meaning of texts. I shall move freely from author to the texts themselves, to the audience or reader, in an attempt to show how stylistic study may be useful whether one emphasizes author, work, or reader. My comments may come dangerously close to the affective fallacy, yet I do not think that we can overlook the reader's participation in the creation of meaning and his responsibility in making texts accessible.[3]

It is time to move on, then, from these remarks on theoretical stylistics to some observations about Faulkner's style. And let me make a new start here by stating that the title of my essay, tempting or teasing as it may be, is also somewhat misleading. What does "inadequacies of style" mean? When is a style inadequate, or adequate? In relation to what? I think it possible to agree on a linguistic practice, a diction, a rhythm, a sentence structure that is more adequate than another in the description of a particular scene, event, or character, but I am aware that an "inadequate style" may also be intentionally used for ironical purposes. In rhetorical stylistics, the term "adequate" may be used more appropriately, since we are dealing with levels of style and figures of speech with a specified usage. Most important here is to make clear that "inadequate" does not refer to an esthetics of style, in the sense that an adequate style would be the one that best communicates a metaphysical sense of beauty and truth and all we need to know on earth.[4] This is an understanding of style that

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language." Rather, I am thinking of the different *functions* of language in ordinary speech and in literature.

2 The term belongs to Wittgenstein, and refers to concepts which cannot be defined if we use normal canons of accuracy or rationality, since they also rest on qualities such as intuition and common sense. See Morton W. Bloomfield, "Stylistics and the Theory of Literature," *New Literary History*, 7 (1976), 272.

3 The response– or effect–oriented approach does not have to end in Wimsatt's "affective fallacy" — in pure subjectivism. It must be possible to study the verbal object in the same fashion, and the impossibility of full objectivity does not by necessity result in full subjectivity. See Bloomfield's discussion of this (note 2).

4 "Inadequate style" is perhaps too vague a term to be useful, but very often such an understanding of style (although the term may not be used) can be found in literary analyses. As mentioned later on in the text, the critic must be aware that different images, figures of speech, "style" in general, may be used deliberately — e.g., for ironical purposes or simply as a means of characterization.

I do *not* include in my approach.

To show Faulkner's stylistic peculiarities and preferences in the short stories, I have selected stories from different periods in his long career. From the apprenticeship years, "Moonlight" is my choice, not least because this story invites some comments on style.

There are two distinctly different versions of "Moonlight," although only one — the latter of the two — has been published. If our interest were psychological stylistics, we would find that the two versions give insights into literary creation itself, especially since both versions may be seen as examples of an experimentation in narration and style that Faulkner was to continue till he reached perfection later on. "Moonlight" demonstrates the difficulty of blending pure descriptive passages, burdened down with ornamental language, with dialogue and dramatic action. The style of the descriptive passages does not correlate with the story's events or its thematic significance. The rich metaphorical language, with its repetition of sounds, its numerous alliterations, and its extended and far–fetched similes, contributes to an atmosphere that prepares the reader for something more dramatic and tragic than the characters and events actually provide. I think it is fair to judge as inadequate or improper a descriptive language that is in fact a mythic pattern of strange imagery if the story elements are of little interest or importance. Greek mythology or classical literature must be used with caution in an ordinary story about a young boy who tries to drink whiskey and seduce a young girl, no matter how august the August night is, no matter how seducingly the birds sing in the magnolias.

Admittedly Faulkner has toned down the descriptive passages in the revised version of this early story, but the young poet's preferences for symbolist or imagist poetry and *fin–de–siècle* sentiments still pervade the text. The description of the boy–character's success in entering the porch of a house without being seen does not require extensive analysis or profound comments:

> There was a fatality in it ... . It was as though by gaining the porch unchallenged he had cast the augury, bled the bird, and this was fortune, luck: that instant when desire and circumstance coincide. It was as though they not only coincided, circumstance not only condoned desire, but were actually and suavely coercing it ... . (*US*, 495)

There are instances of very awkward writing in this story, as when the narrator in a parenthesis promises to explain later why the boy did not know the time even if he had his watch on. The rich imagery and the overladen musical language, with recurrent use of "as if" and "as though" and comparisons that include imagery light–years away from the sphere of

the story proper, point very markedly to a certain stylistic preference. Faulkner was also to use this style in later stories, but then in a much more careful and successful balance within the total context of the story, as witnessed, for instance, in "Dry September."[5]

It is neither surprising nor dramatic that Faulkner's handling of narrative and style was inadequate in the very early stories. So let us move on to the major years, and to one of the best but sadly most underrated stories from this period, "Uncle Willy."

"Uncle Willy" is one of the many Faulkner stories with a child–narrator, although it differs from most such stories because the perspective offered is not just limited, but radically different from that of the good women and men of Jefferson. There is moreover no doubt that the implied author, not least through devices that a stylistic analysis may reveal, espouses the same attitude or ideal as the 14–year–old boy, who narrates his story not only in order to make other people understand but perhaps also to convince himself that his understanding is adequate. Especially in its opening and concluding parts the story functions as an apology and defense for the boy's having run away from home. But the story is also a kind of homage to "the finest man I ever knew" (*CS*, 225), and it requires a deliberate and careful narrative structuring and use of rhetorical style to persuade father, town, and readers that the boy did right, and that it was all worth it. The moral issues at stake in the story are very complicated, and support/persuasion/ conviction one way or the other seem very much to depend upon the sympathy and empathy conveyed through an emotional use of literary if not poetic language. Certainly, the poetic function of language is dominant in those parts of the story where the boy explains, defends, argues, *begs* that the reader understand or sympathize.

On the level of paragraphs or larger units of meaning the story is structured around opposites or contradictions, often so that what "they" said is first presented, then negated by the narrator, and then the negations are supplemented by positive statements giving the real reasons for Uncle Willy's or the boy's actions. This by necessity leads to repetition, mostly of the repetition–with–variation type.[6] In the first paragraph we have these statements about why the boy ran away from home:

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[5] The psycho–physical parallelism used by Faulkner in "Dry September" functions so well because the conflicts and the ensuing action are unusually dramatic. In "Moonlight" elaborate stylistic experimentation serves the function of decoration, and seems to be an end in itself.

[6] Faulkner's repetitions are very often of the kind that we may call "repetition with variation and complication." The variation serves to place a description in opposition to a former description as when humor or comedy is used to create antithetical structures out of scenes or events that would otherwise simply have been repeated with slight modification.

1. They said I didn't run away from home but that I was tolled away by a crazy man ...
2. ... I wasn't tolled away and Uncle Willy wasn't crazy ...
3. I went because Uncle Willy was the finest man I ever knew ... (*CS*, 225)

Furthermore, in part V of the story, the boy returns to his speculations about how to understand his running away, and using similar statements with significant modifications, he continues the work of textual persuasion:

1. Even Papa thought he was crazy now... [and that] I was tolled away by a lunatic ...
2. But he didn't toll me away.
3. I went because I wanted to, because he was the finest man I ever knew ... (*CS*, 238–39)

A private and controversial understanding is set up against the conformity, normality, and decency of "them," and Uncle Willy is so much of an outsider that his friend and the story's narrator must somehow give an impression of something sacred, genuine, humane that should not be broken or crushed. In addition to a kind of argumentative rhetoric through oppositions and refutations of opinions, a sense of closeness and warmth, of something valuable that should not be allowed to be destroyed, must be transmitted. This sense is conveyed to the reader more successfully than in most Faulkner stories narrated by children, through the boy's wonder, uncertainty, and insistence, and through the words, images, symbols, and structures in which it is presented. Although the boy fears that the narratee — the story's "you" — may never really understand, the numerous negations in the text do not constitute a denial of reality. They rather function to persuade the reader that other persons' fictions that pass as reality should be replaced by *his* version.

An important technical or stylistic device is the repeated use of explanatory sentences beginning with "Because ...," indicating a willingness and an urge to explain, to make the reader understand. In the opening paragraphs of parts I and V where the boy talks about why he left home, "because" is used six and seven times respectively. Corresponding to this need for defending and explaining are the many "corrections" in the text: Something is told, then negated, and a new but vague understanding is set forth. "But it wasn't that" and similar expressions abound, indicating a deeper structure, a more profound reason, a more genuine feeling beneath the surface of things. The description of Willy's eyes "behind his glasses kind of all run together like broken eggs" (*CS*, 227), but always with *life* in them in the boy's view, is another complicated and repeated image, showing a person who chooses life and being alive rather than the stale and boring non–life of most people in Jefferson. Not only the designation

"Uncle" (for someone who is not an uncle to anybody) but also common underdog sympathies, childish outbursts and an obvious generation conflict support rather than reduce the importance of very adequate stylistic measures. Everything is done to assure us that the deepest motivation for the boy's actions can be found in unspoilt love and compassion and commitment to people in need.

"Uncle Willy" is a story in which all stylistic devices contribute to creating a convincing picture of deep and lasting love, even when the love is in conflict with one's social environment and its norms and codes. The author's moral commitment does not lead to cheap or easy sentimental writing. The World War II story, "Shall Not Perish," is, on the other hand, in my reading and analysis of its style and rhetoric, strongly overwritten and is one of the few sentimental stories Faulkner wrote.[7] The strong emotionality or sentimentality can be explained by reference to its historical context, but inadequacies of style, which support or lead to a failure in the communication of the story's message or thematic impact, can easily be found. The final pages of the story are most revealing. The narrator's insistence on the text's significance comes through, loud and clear. Here we meet the aging author whose earlier outrage has abated, whose war stories sell immediately to the *Saturday Evening Post* — "An American Institution" — and whose sentimental and tear–jerking story about loss and grief and one's duty to America is only redeemed a little by the descriptions of endurance and other admirable qualities among the yeomen farmers of Yoknapatawpha County. The rhetorical force is almost violent, but strangely inefficient, and comic relief — tears giving way to laughter — is not used here as so often elsewhere in Faulkner's fiction.

A deeper understanding, and an understanding which is reflected on all levels of the text, in the choice of words, structure of sentences, sound patterns and even in the reliance on assonance and consonance as well as alliteration, can be found in Faulkner's last story, or fictional essay, "Sepulture South: Gaslight." I do not think that a theme or motif has one "style" that is more fitting or proper than others, but writing about graveyards and death in the old South in some sense or other requires serious prose and is likely to make use of euphemisms. We accept rich ornamental language, we expect philosophical statements about life and death. The real test of a graveyard report in fictional or essayistic form is its balance, much of which may of course lie in the eyes of the reader. Few subjects become cheap or superficial more easily; but it can also be

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[7] It is possible to argue that *pathos* and not *sentimentality* is at the core of this story, especially since the mother and father Grier are capable of handling their grief so well. Nevertheless, the final paragraphs of the story, with their insistence on the unity of America and the elements that make it a nation, represent sentiments Faulkner did not normally express.

presented with genuine emotion, so that life somehow becomes enhanced and improved because of a new understanding of the dead and our relationship with them.

"Sepulture South: Gaslight" is a very dense story, told in retrospect by the oldest grandson of the Grandfather whose death is at the center of the story, but the narrative is so handled that the temporal orientation is varied from past tense, to present tense, to future expectation of something that from the now–point of the narration is clearly a past moment. From the time of the funeral, there are also clear analepses to the first memory of a dead person and to the day when Grandmother's statue was erected and inspected in the cemetery. Knowing that everything in the story is a sheltered memory, a reminiscence by someone who is very much part of a tradition, the seeming complications of the narrative become simple: his mind wanders, and this is reflected in a text that moves back and forth in time but remains close to the rites and ritual of an established family's handling of their dead ones. The story about Grandfather's death functions as a framework, while the text is more a reflection on and finally a celebration of a culture and a way of life that has incorporated, assimilated, and accepted death as part of life. The narrator is aware of the follies and griefs of human affairs, but sees the need for and the effects of symbols and symbolic action: decorum is important.

Despite brief descriptions of whiskey and women (Uncle Rodney), of childhood memories, and of the Negro servants and their strange tradition, the story is kept at a very solemn and serious pitch. It moves one, it holds something up for one, in a language perfectly matched to the subject it describes — or, alternatively, which this linguistic structure creates. And, finally, once more to negate the "inadequacies" of my paper's title, I shall quote the last paragraph of this last story:

> And three or four times a year I would come back, I would not know why, alone to look at them, not just Grandfather and Grandmother but at all of them looming among the lush green of summer and the regal blaze of fall and the rain and ruin of winter before spring would bloom again, stained now, a little darkened by time and weather and endurance but still serene, impervious, remote, gazing at nothing, not like sentinels, not defending the living from the dead by means of their vast ton–measured weight and mass, but rather the dead from the living; shielding instead the vacant and dissolving bones, the harmless and defenseless dust, from the anguish and grief and inhumanity of mankind. (*US*, 455)

"Sepulture South: Gaslight" shows many typical aspects of Faulkner's style, such as a tendency to heap image upon image, even from different areas of experience, through the use of "as if" and "as though" or "like" and through negations. It shows a propensity for long and winding sentences, for repetition and variation, for the blending of latinate words and

colloquial speech, for antithetical structures, inversions, and other "distortions" of ordinary language. This of course implies the more far–reaching question whether the text is not first and foremost self–referential, relying on a kind of private intertextuality which seems typical of Faulkner's late career.

In the case of individual short stories, some of the striking characteristics of Faulkner's style are clearly "inadequate" in the sense that they become too dominant in relation to the subject–matter. "Stylistics," therefore, still has an important role to play in any attempt at *evaluation* of a text or writer, particularly in an age where many find critical evaluation or appreciation exceedingly problematic.

Ursula Brumm (Berlin)

Theme and Narrative Voice in Faulkner's "Old Man"

Faulkner's story "Old Man" deserves to be subtitled "Don Quixote in Mississippi" because, as has been largely overlooked, the plot hinges on a motif which at first sight seems very much out of place in a story on the Mississippi Flood of 1927: the Don Quixote motif of "harmful reading," of literature imitated, and thus mistakenly applied in real life. Consequently, literature and its functions in human life are the dominant, if neglected, level of meaning in this story.[1]

Faulkner's "Old Man" is based on two very dissimilar protagonists, one of whom, the title–hero, the "Old Man," is actually non–human: he is the Mississippi, the "Father of Waters," a numinous power. He is, in fact, the supreme agent, whose will and actions are the motivating and moving force of this story. The "Old Man" is "on a debauch" and this is actually his true nature: from time to time he breaks the dams which men have erected to subdue him, displays his temper, and exercises his destructive yet fertile power. He is, as we shall see, Mentor and Shaman in the trials which the other protagonist of the story has to undergo during the flood. This human protagonist remains without a proper name: he is "the tall convict," and the fact that he is a convict is the result of "harmful reading" of literature wrongly applied to life.

The convict, a hillman from the poor, barren pine hill region of Yoknapatawpha, imprisoned at the age of 19, is without experience and knowledge of the outside world. At first, he is almost without words, nearly illiterate, and wholly "inarticulate." He has been sentenced for an attempted train robbery, which he planned by taking his instructions from dime novels, trying to imitate their heroes.

> He had laid his plans in advance, he had followed his printed (and false) authority to the letter; he had saved the paper–backs for two years, reading and re–reading them, memorizing them, comparing and weighing story and method against story and method, taking the good from each and discarding the dross as

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[1] A motif analysis of this story has not yet been undertaken to my knowledge and few interpretations have regarded this story as an independent unit. Most often, it has been seen as part of or a companion piece to "Wild Palms." See, for instance, Thomas L. McHaney, *William Faulkner's* The Wild Palms. *A Study* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1975).

his workable plan emerged. (*WP*, 24)

When he tries to execute his plans, he is arrested before he has collected any valuables and since then he has been brooding over the problem: he "mused with raging impotence" (*WP*, 25) about what he was incapable of expressing at the trial.

> ... there was something else he could not tell them at the trial, did not know how to tell them. It was not the money he had wanted. It was not riches, not the crass loot; that would have been merely a bangle to wear upon the breast of his pride like the Olympic runner's amateur medal — a symbol, a badge to show that he too was the best at his chosen gambit in the living and fluid world of his time. (*WP*, 25)

Upon being sentenced, he blames the writers for his failure. He feels

> ... an outrage directed not at the men who had foiled his crime, not even at the lawyers and judges who had sent him here, but at the writers, the uncorporeal names attached to the stories, the paper novels — the Diamond Dicks and Jesse Jameses and such — whom he believed had led him into his present predicament through their own ignorance and gullibility ... . (*WP*, 23)

In place of chivalry and courtly romances, the popular literature which enchanted Don Quixote, we have here pulp stories which use crime and robbery for entertainment, suspense, and adventure. The metamorphosis of the knight of La Mancha into a poor illiterate hillman — who like Don Quixote is "tall, lean, flat–stomached" (*WP*, 23) — not only involves an updating but also a transformation of the motif and its consequences.

Here is a young man reared in a world so primitive that it exists with a minimum of written communication. The cheap stories of pulp magazines are the only form of literature which is available to him but precisely this literature proves to be destructive for him. In his ignorance, which for Faulkner is also a kind of innocence resulting from deficient self–knowledge, he accepts this literature stubbornly as truth, even as a kind of how–to–do–it instruction. Instead of fulfilling the convict's hope to overcome the limitations of his existence, this literature, instead of liberating, imprisons him. A liberating function, on the other hand, is performed by a force of nature: the great river on the rampage, the mischievous destroyer of the works of man, which he whirls about as wreckage, becomes the hillman's liberator, releases him from the prison, teaches him to fulfill his tasks, and in the end, even educates him to narrate his experience.

No doubt that Faulkner felt involved by his own responsibility as a writer. When he presented literature here not as "enriching," either materially or ideally, but as dangerous and even imprisoning, he pondered what could happen if his fictions were taken seriously — a speculation which

for every writer must be fascinating as well as frightening to envision.

In his application of the motif, Faulkner stresses the writer's inherent guilt: the hillman accuses the writers of ignorance and gullibility and implicitly of irresponsibility. A literal, slavishly "criminal" imitation of literature is a mark of a naive, ignorant or deluded person, and such deficiencies demand emendation, which, carried over into plot, calls for transformations and transitions. Thus, Faulkner's particular use of the motif requires patterns of initiation with rites of passage to dominate the story, and enact these transitions, and effect the eventual transformation of a character to maturity.[2]

Actually, rites of passage were already the ruling pattern in the quests of medieval romances and their imitation by Don Quixote. Viewed from this angle, Faulkner's decision to couple the motif of "harmful reading" with a Mississippi flood is wholly convincing: the torrential river and the immensity of the flooded land represent in classic fashion the no–man's land, the territory beyond, in which the candidate has to pass the ordeals of his initiation. Consequently, the story "Old Man" is clearly structured according to the three stages of passage: "separation," "transition" and "incorporation." The convict, (temporarily) released from the prison, is sent on to the unfamiliar and dangerous flooded territory, finally returning to Parchman where he is re–incorporated into the prison community. Even the basic function of such rites of passage, change of status, is indicated: the hillman, who formerly had refused to become a "trusty" (a prisoner who functions as overseer), because he "had already tried to use a gun one time too many," after his return achieves a new standing and reputation among his fellow prisoners on account of his experience and achievements.

The theme and its implications are expressed by strong images: the prison and the human order on land are set against the limitless expanse of the flood by harsh angular and metallic images of imprisonment: dams, chains, shackles, trucks with their square "steel bodies." When the river breaks the dams, the prisoners are taken to serve in rescue operations. In the trucks they are "padlocked by the ankles to the truck itself" (to the "steel body" of the truck). The "clashing and clanking of the shackles" dominates the scene until the convict notices another sound, "a profound whisper." A negro tells him: "Dat's him. Dat's the Ole Man" (*WP*, 72). For his mission on the water, the "tall convict" is released ("the guard unlocked the chain") and with another prisoner, "the plump convict"

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[2] A very enlightening discussion of the anthropological and the literary meaning of rites of passage can be found in R.A. Zwick, *Rites de passage in den Romanen* Why Are We in Vietnam *und* An American Dream *von Norman Mailer* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1984).

(together they are a Don Quixote – Sancho Panza pair), is sent out to rescue people from drowning.

It is not the purpose of this paper to analyze the convict's adventures or to demonstrate the rites–of–passage nature of his experience. (I have tried to prove this in a paper published in German last year[3]). It may suffice here to say that the convict's journey displays the whole range of classical rites–of–passage motifs: death and rebirth (he also assists in a birth), bloodletting, endurance tests, change of clothing, deprivation of food and sleep, control of fear, and numerous tests of courage, endurance, and skill.

The re–incorporation of the neophyte is the successful completion of his initiation. The fact that he decides to return to the prison voluntarily signals a willingness to do penance for the criminal act. Moreover, among the community of prisoners, the only community he knows, he can prove that his experience has matured him. A symbol of his new adulthood and masculinity is the cigar in his hand when he tells his companions the story of his trials and adventures.

When sentenced, the convict was unable to express his thoughts and intentions: "he could not tell them at the trial, did not know how to tell them" (*WP*, 25). Now, however, he is able to articulate his experiences, a fruit of the rites of transition and, at the same time, the logical and necessary solution to the problems posed by the motif ruling the story: the motif of slavishly imitated literature, which after undergoing its own "transition," turns into the creative production of literature. The specific mode of this production and its share in the telling of the story is enacted in the narrative technique which Faulkner worked out for "Old Man."

Although not in reference to "Old Man," critic Arthur Edelstein has characterized Faulkner's style by using flood imagery:

> Faulkner fashioned a rhetoric of inundation; a language that assaulted the sensibility, arousing, punishing, implicating. It is a voice of floods and whirlpools — at its worst, drowning away all sense, dizzying and alienating its readers; at its best, immersing him in experience, spiraling in upon meaning, vitalizing it.[4]

It seems that Faulkner himself also conceived of literary creativity in terms of flood imagery — for he dramatized the attainment of "voice" by a story in which the River God breaks the shackles of an imprisoned self and inundates his mind.

This theme also informs the narrative strategies of the story. The story

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[3] "Das Motiv 'Gelebte Literatur' in William Faulkners 'Old Man,'" *Gelebte Literatur in der Literatur. Studien zu Erscheinungsformen und Geschichte eines Motivs*, ed. Theodor Wolpers (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1986), 298–310.

[4] *Nine Masters of the Short Story* (New York: Random, 1968), 248.

is told by an auctorial narrator who begins with the detached attitude of a historian: "Once (it was in Mississippi in May, in the flood year 1927) there were two convicts" (*WP*, 23). He soon focuses his interest on the tall convict, also transmitting his thoughts and feelings, without, however, making him the center of consciousness, or adopting his point of view. Half–way through the tall convict's adventures on the flood, however, the reader is suddenly made aware of the fact that the auctorial narration is based on the convict's story as he orally reports it to his fellow prisoners: "This is how he told about it seven weeks later, sitting in new bedticking garments, shaved and with his hair cut again, on his bunk in the barracks" (*WP*, 158-59). We have just been told that on his Odyssey an icy wind blew him in his skiff "onto the wild bosom of the Father of Waters" — and now learn about the contrasting situation in the prison where this experience is being remembered and communicated. After this, the story is continued in the third–person, which we now realize is the auctorial narrator's presumably faithful transcript of the convict's oral delivery. We are thus reminded that every narration is made up of the double feature of experience lived and the rendering of it and that often this fellowship is not without diversities or disagreements.

Faulkner loved to experiment with techniques of narrative styles in order to express just this, as in the story "Was," where the third–person narrative has to be deciphered as Isaac McCaslin's version of a first–person narration which he had received many years before from his cousin McCaslin Edmonds (the narrative "cross–cousin" relation is revealed by the names). In "Old Man" Faulkner again alerts us to the partnership of protagonist and narrator as the basis of narrative authority and authenticity, the conditions of which in most fictions remain unexplored.

In "Old Man" these conditions are revealed when, in the later parts of the story, we are reminded a number of times by the interspersion of "he told them" (*WP*, 239), "He told it" (*WP*, 252), "He tried to tell that too" (*WP*, 170) and similar inserts that we are listening to a tale which has emerged in two stages: an original version of the protagonist's first–person report and a second one which has been edited by the narrator. At one point the auctorial narrator implicitly refers to the necessity of his own editing efforts by informing us:

> He did not tell it that way, just as he apparently did not consider it worth the breath to tell how he had got the hundred–and–sixty–pound skiff single–handed up and across and down the sixty–foot levee. (*WP*, 252)

He is too modest, or proud to brag with his achievements, "[b]ut he remembered it" — and thus the narrator, as his *alter ego*, transmits the remembered experience to the reader, who therefore learns more than the

listeners.

Also, Faulkner in this story has made the mode of the telling part of the plot: he has dramatized it by presenting the situation in which the tale emerged. In the later parts of the story the narrative flow is interrupted with increasing frequency by the questions and comments with which the plump convict and other listeners interrupt the tall convict's tale. The answers he provides explain and amplify the story; they soon merge imperceptibly into the auctorial third–person narrative.

This highly sophisticated strategy thus includes aspects of the story's reception — here by the fellow prisoners, who through their questions participate in the emergence of the story. We are thus made aware how the story and the act of telling it react on each other, how a story is conditioned by the situation in which it is told, and how the telling is inspired by its audience, its "explicit" listeners.

The convict has obviously told his story in installments, during rest periods. At the same time, as the author–narrator lets us know, the return of the prisoner, who had been discharged as dead, causes serious embarrassment to the prison administration, which is resolved by adding ten years to his sentence for attempted escape — a cynical farce of justice in which a corrupt system of human order reacts to the creative disorder of the river. The convict accepts this with equanimity — "If that's the rule" (*WP*, 331).

Upon the prompting of the plump convict, he takes up his story again at a point where from the relatively sluggishly flooded land he came back to the turbulent river. His report in direct speech is interrupted by the auctorial narrator:

> Then suddenly and quietly, something — the inarticulateness, the innate and inherited reluctance for speech, dissolved and he found himself, listened to himself, telling it quietly, the words coming not fast but easily to the tongue as he required them. (*WP*, 332)

It is at this point that the story emerges truly in the convict's own version. Only from here on, we may assume, is he fully able to express what happened to him on his flood Odyssey, while before he needed the narrator's intuitive and interpretative help.

Significantly, the breakthrough to full expression occurs when the convict remembers how he got back on the river and that he had finally learned to handle his skiff: the River God who as mentor had presided over his adventures on the flood, now, at second remove, while the convict remembers this, effects the liberation of mind and tongue which enables the convict to become the narrator of his experience, and thus a creator, instead of an imitator of literature. Thus, the telling of the story, the narrative mode, becomes part of the plot.

Thomas L. McHaney (Atlanta)

Problems of Faulkner's Poetics

No one has more reason to welcome the growing familiarity with the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin in the West than a Faulknerian. One reads Bakhtin's observations about the novel with that shock of recognition that Faulkner himself might have felt had he known his contemporary (they were born just two years apart and Bakhtin published his *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* the same year that Faulkner published two essentially polyphonic novels, *Sartoris* and *The Sound and the Fury*). Bakhtin's statements about the polyphonic novel, the dialogic imagination, the parodic and intertextual irreverence of the genre that won't become generic are strikingly compatible with Faulkner's metaphors for how he wrote ("I hear voices"; "I follow my characters around and write down what they say"), his remarks about the craft of novel writing ("a one–armed man trying to build a hen–house in a hurricane"; "a window–dresser arranging his wares"), and his observations on the form of the novel itself: the writer wants to put down the "magic of breathing" but "he is not too interested in the form it finally takes as a book."

Faulkner, who was once called the "bearded Dostoevsky of the canebrakes," greatly admired Bakhtin's favorite novelist, and in a 1931 interview which one would like to have in accurate transcription, instead of the paraphrase we have received, Faulkner was reported to have "a very interesting idea, centering about the thesis that Dostoevsky could have written the *Brothers [Karamazov]* in one third the space had he let the characters tell their own stories instead of filling page after page with exposition. In the future novel — Mr. Faulkner contends — there will be no straight exposition, but instead, objective presentations, by means of soliloquies or speeches of the characters" (*LG*, 18).

Bakhtin saw the novel as "a living mix of varied and opposing voices," an "assemblage of discourses,"[1] a possibility Faulkner seems to have intuited beginning at least with *Soldiers' Pay*. For Bakhtin, the novel has "authentic folkloric roots" in popular laughter, a condition Faulkner's own novels can meet, especially such early attempts as *Elmer* and *Father*

[1] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 3, 39, xxviii.

Abraham. Faulkner's use of his literary experience, rarely simply allusive, accords with Bakhtin's notions of intertextuality — that the novel absorbs into itself many forms and styles, where they are used and parodied, their language renewed by incorporating extraliterary polyphonia: "[N]ovelistic layers of literary language ... become dialogized, permeated with laughter, irony, humor, elements of self–parody and finally — this is the most important thing — the novel inserts into these other genres an indeterminacy, a certain semantic openendedness, a living contact with unfinished, still–evolving contemporary reality."[2]

Like Bakhtin, Faulkner took an interest in Bergson, and his discoveries about the novelist's relation to fictional time and space — "time can be shaped quite a bit by the artist; after all, man is never time's slave" (*LG*, 70); "I can move these people around like God, not only in space but in time, too" proving "my own theory that time is a fluid condition which has no existence except in the momentary avatars of individual people" (*LG*, 255) — seem paralleled in Bakhtin's observations: "One can play with ... the primordial artistic symbols of space and time — above, below, in front of, behind, earlier, later, first, last, past, present, brief (momentary), long and so forth. What reigns supreme here is the artistic logic of analysis, dismemberment."[3]

I could go on, but just these striking resemblances are assurances, I think, that Bakhtin's name will appear more and more frequently in the Faulkner critical bibliography. Briefly, I would like merely to suggest some uses for Bakhtin regarding *Light in August*, especially in the context of Cleanth Brooks' influential reading of that novel.

As we all know, Brooks uses *Light in August* at the beginning of *The Yoknapatawpha Country* to establish that community is the central image in all of Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha work and the ethical touchstone against which almost everything and everyone in the novels can be judged and understood.[4] Community is, in addition, the "unifying principle" in *Light in August* itself, the answer to all objections or puzzlements about the principle of organization Faulkner evolved to entangle the several tales of disrupted isolation that make up the novel. Brooks' specifics about community have had wide appeal and a remarkable longevity, though it is not difficult to detect the rhetoric in Brooks' special pleading for the objective existence of an arcadian Southern community and hardly impossible to find that *Light in August* presents a far darker world than Brooks wants to acknowledge in his vision of the South. In the same re-

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2 Bakhtin, 7.

3 Bakhtin, 24.

4 Cleanth Brooks, *William Faulkner: The Yoknatawpha Country* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963).

gard, and despite some sophisticated readings of the book's modernist discontinuity and uncertainty, the "unity" of *Light in August* is a concept that also lives on, though other themes or images in addition to community have been offered as its basis.

For example, structuralist theory based in linguistics or anthropology, with its binary polarities, might be expected to take a looser hold on *Light in August*, but John Tucker's useful 1980 structuralist approach still assumes that thematic "unity" is what one will secure upon reading the novel correctly, and he finds this unity, ultimately, in the fact that "Faulkner, the regionalist, accepts the equal importance of the community and its needs" over and against the rebellious individual.[5] Thus his essay appears to absolutize community in much the same way as Brooks.

The term "unity" may be attacked on many grounds, and in 1973 Arthur K. Moore, a crusty American esthetician, summed up objections to the term in a chapter of his *Contestable Concepts of Literary Theory:* it was his view, contra the New Critics or even, say, E. D. Hirsch or Wayne Booth, that "to seek to determine meaning precisely is to surpass the literary object and to expose it to the deforming force of ideological considerations." In fact, "attempts to demonstrate unity [in a literary work] by recourse to supposed political, social, theological, or other concerns tend to be interpretive and often prove mutually exclusive."[6] This is a useful point, and we who were raised on New Criticism are now better aware that it privileges cultural and theological biases that Faulkner's imagination transcended. The work of Bakhtin, however, throws light upon the way in which the view of Brooks and other New Critics tended to make Faulkner's work into one of the high genres — epic or lyric — instead of pursuing Faulkner's achievement in the low and vital form that was his medium.

Brooks' view is sufficiently well known to need no reference, but I will quote one passage from his essay "Southern Literature: The Well–Springs of Its Vitality" (1962) as exemplary:

> the sense of community is the very stuff out of which most of the literature of the South is made. Yet it is something that easily goes unnoticed, and indeed the Southerner himself, since it is as familiar to him as the air that he breathes, may take it, like the air, for granted. Conversely, the outlander who does not take it for granted may find a novel like ... *Light in August* quite baffling, simply because he is unaware of the force of community which pervades that novel, and being unaware of it, he misses the central structure of the novel.[7]

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5 John Tucker, "William Faulkner's *Light in August*: Toward a Structuralist Reading," *Modern Language Quarterly*, 43 (1980), 138–55; 154.

6 Arthur K. Moore, *Contestable Concepts of Literary Theory* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 230, 139.

7 *Georgia Review*, 16 (1962), 238-53; 249.

As Bakhtin says, "the dead are loved in a different way." If what Brooks describes existed, it seems to me, it would have no future, for it could not change; and it could only be depicted in one of the finished forms, such as epic, for it represents the absolute past.

In Bakhtin's view, however, "the novel took shape precisely at the point when epic distance was disintegrating, when both the world and man were assuming a degree of comic familiarity, when the object of artistic representation was being degraded to the level of a contemporary reality that was inconclusive and fluid." The novel had its roots not in attempts to heroicize or valorize a culture, but in popular laughter, "cheerful and annihilating":

> Alongside direct representation — laughing at living reality — there flourish parody and travesty of all high genres and of all lofty models embodied in national myth. The "absolute past" of gods, demigods and heroes is here, in parodies and even more so in travesties, contemporized: it is brought low, represented on a plane equal with contemporary life, in an everyday environment, in the low language of contemporaneity.[8]

What better terms on which to receive the dark comedy of *Light in August* with all its parodies and travesties: the Christian story is much travestied, including a little skein of images in the novel that one might call "Lumbering to Jerusalem": Joe is born illegitimately in a lumber camp, and Lena comes of age in one, where she meets her "sawmill Casanova" Lucas Burch and conceives an illegitimate child of her own; Joe and Lena and Lucas (now Joe Brown) add Bunch to their number as they pass through the planing mill in Jefferson. (As John Tucker has noted,[9] the foreman says that a run through the planer might wipe the sullen look off Joe's face). After Joanna's murder, Joe's death, the birth of Lena's baby, and the flight of Lucas, the surviving remnant, looking like the holy family, is carried north by a furniture dealer (further refinement?) from the east (well, the eastern part of Mississippi) who turns the retelling of it into a gospel of (married) love.

In like manner, Faulkner travesties the Adonis and Diana myths, Jungian archetypes, and crosses the naturalistic novel with Bergsonian "free acts." Apotheosis, achieved with a good deal of rhetorical grandeur for each major character, is countered with such undercutting statements as Joe's "If I'm not [a nigger], damned if I haven't wasted a lot of time" (*LA*, 241); Lena's realization, as she squeezes her pregnant body through the window, that if it had been so difficult before, she would not be trying to get out now; and the country man's observation about Joanna's

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8 Bakhtin, 39.

9 Tucker, 147.

twisted severed head, "if she could just have done that when she was alive, she might not have been doing it now."

I am reasonably suspicious that passages in the novel parody Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson and James Joyce, among others, including Faulkner himself: in Faulkner's maverick imagination, it isn't just epicene girls who look and smell like trees: Lena is a Grove — but of course Byron is a Bunch, Lucas a Burch, and even Joe a Christmas (tree)?

All this amidst much confusion of tongues: misnaming, renaming, false naming. While upon first reflection it might be said that the one truly unifying word in Yoknapatawpha is "nigger," Faulkner's novel casts the meaning of that word — along with "blood" as a genetic term — into radical doubt. As the informing narrative voice that rides godlike over this book puts it: "Through the long afternoon ... the clerks, the idle, the countrymen in overalls; the talk. It went here and there about the town ... flared again, momentarily revived, to wives and families about supper tables ... And on the next day, the slow, pleasant country Sunday ... they told it again" — the "they" myriad, the "it" summed up in one sentence: "He don't look any more like a nigger than I do" (*LA*, 330). There is a great deal of seeing in *Light in August* and very little knowing. "I don't know" becomes, in fact, a dialogical refrain spoken by several characters in the face of the pointed questions they are asked.

As the authorial voice describes them, the townspeople of Jefferson are of different faiths, occupations, ages, backgrounds, and interests. Even the planing mill crew with which Byron works is composed of both family men and bachelors who "were of different ages and they led a catholic variety of lives" (*LA*, 36). In Jefferson, surprisingly, in the light of reading Brooks, one finds "the casual Yankees and the poor whites and even the southerners who had lived for a while in the north" (*LA*, 271). Common experience is actually rare. Hightower's defrocking had brought people out, "the street lined with men who never went to church anyway, and little boys who did not know exactly what it was but that it was something" (*LA*, 64). The fire at Joanna's is a Roman holiday which provides relief, the narrative voice tells us, from the bitter tensions of being at work in the town: a merchant tricking and cajoling customers, a lawyer lurking in a musty office amid "ghosts of old lusts and lies," a lying doctor, or an idle wife "with secret frustrated breasts" (*LA*, 273).

In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin observes that the polyphonic novel makes new demands upon the critics who have tried to provide Dostoevsky's heroes with "finalizing definitions, to find without fail a specific monological authorial idea, to always look for superficial veri-

similitude."[10] Faulkner's work has suffered just such analysis from the New Critics. Yet, Bakhtin goes on, the

> *scientific* consciousness of contemporary man has learned to orient itself in the complex circumstances of "the probability of the universe;" no "uncertainties" are capable of confusing this scientific consciousness, for it knows how to calculate and account for them. It has long since grown accustomed to the Einsteinian world with its multitudinous systems of measurement, etc. But in the realm of *artistic* cognition people continue now and then to demand the crudest, most primitive certainty, which cannot possibly be true.

We have had a good deal of relief from the simple and certain view of Faulkner's work in recent years, and Bakhtin's books and essays, I hope, will provide a newer basis for more complex pleasure in Faulkner's novels and a deeper sense of how acutely and how characteristically Faulkner portrays modern reality.

As Stephen Ross has demonstrated with *Absalom, Absalom!*, Bakhtin's poetics can help us discern the implication and function of the various voices in *Light in August*, including the represented authorial voice that rides smoothly on the rough surface of the novel.[11] In "Epic and Novel," Bakhtin says that the author "may turn up on the field of representation in any authorial pose," depicting or alluding to his own life or polemicizing with literary enemies (one thinks of *The Wild Palms*). "This is not merely a matter of the author's image appearing within his own field of representation ... [but] depicting authorial language now lies in the same plane as the depicted language of the hero, and may enter into dialogic relations and hybrid combinations."[12]

Bakhtin claimed for Dostoevsky that

> The object of the author's aspirations is not at all [the] totality of ideas [thoughts and words passed through several unmerged voices, taking on a different sound in each] in and of itself, as something neutral and identical with itself. No, the object is precisely the act of passing the themes through many and varied voices ... the fundamental, irrescindable multivoicedness and varivoicedness of the theme.[13]

This view, it seems to me, translates easily to our perception of Faulkner and may lead to previously unspoken insights into his fiction and into how the deployment of these voices accords with Faulkner's various metaphors — musical, architectural, entrepreneurial — for the way he worked.

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10 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. R.W. Rotsel (New York: Ardis, 1973), 229.

11 Stephen M. Ross, "The Evocation of Voice in *Absalom, Absalom!*," *Essays in Literature*, 19 (1981), 135–49.

12 Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 27.

13 Bakhtin, *Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 226.

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Narration and Naming in *The Reivers*

> Laughter and polyglossia had paved the way for the novelistic discourse of modern times.
>
> Mikhail Bakhtin

When Faulkner's library at Rowan Oak was catalogued in September 1962, it contained a 1927 copy of *The Golden Ass of Apuleius, Being the Metamorphoses of Lucius Apuleius,* a narrative account of a young man who, transformed for a while into an ass, finally becomes a priest of Osiris, the supreme Father of the Gods.[1] The picaresque journey that Lucius, a young man of good birth, makes, and his lusty adventures, often undertaken against his will, in addition to his final religious and moral commitment, provide enough appropriate material to lead me to presume that this text might well be one of the more important pieces of lumber that Faulkner used in crafting *The Reivers.* Lucius Priest, in exile from Jefferson less than a week, unites his fate to an animal (after delivering a panegyric on mules) by winning a race on a horse that, according to Ned, exhibits the specific characteristics of a certain mule Ned once owned.[2] As a result, Faulkner's young Lucius is able to rejoin the Priest family, become part of normal society and even be accepted into Boon's and Corrie's extended family precisely because he and Lightning formed a single triumphant entity.

The Apuleian text does not lend itself to a point–by–point comparison with *The Reivers*; rather, it incorporates the type of journey narrative, replete with literary and anthropomorphic allusions, that might have intrigued Faulkner in his latter days and captured his imagination as did, at this period of his life, it would seem, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Twain's *The Adventures of Huck Finn*, Shakespeare's *The Tempest,* Richardson's

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1 See Joseph Blotner, *William Faulkner's Library: A Catalogue* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1964), 79.

2 See William T. Stafford's "'Some Homer of the Cotton Fields': Faulkner's Use of the Mule Early and Later (*Sartoris* and *The Reivers*)," *Papers on Language and Literature,* 5 (Spring, 1969), 190–96.

Clarissa, Cervantes' *The Adventures of Don Quixote*, Fielding's *Tom Jones*, the Faust myth and Sherwood Anderson's story "I Want to Know Why."[3] From one point of view, Faulkner has stitched together a patchwork of previous stories, incidents, and literary references that help establish *The Reivers* as a delightful résumé of his work. Judith Wittenberg notes that the novel "constitutes, in fact, a retrospective gesture that encompasses all strata of the past, from his personal family history to the general literary tradition of which he was a twentieth–century inheritor."[4] Yet, more is at stake, I believe; by recalling and releasing the potential of other literary texts and myths, and particularly by a fortuitous way of naming his characters and creatures, *The Reivers* internalizes certain dimensions of the history of literature. It restructures, in its own way, this literary history as it continues to construct the final dimensions of Faulkner's own cosmos, where indeed the present is announced in terms of the past and the significance of the past is interpreted in light of the present, thus achieving a text whose (sub–)texts are in dialogue with each other resulting in implied responses that always create anticipated, open–ended, but never–answered new questions.

In an important critique of *The Golden Ass*, Mikhail Bakhtin notes that metamorphosis is the governing literary principle upon which this narrative rotates, and becomes "a vehicle for conceptualizing and portraying personal, individual fate, a fate cut off from both the cosmic and historical whole."[5] To put it another way, metamorphosis in this novel "serves as the basis for a method of portraying the whole of an individual's life

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[3] For a fine analysis of the sources of *The Reivers* as well as related episodes in Faulkner's other works, see James B. Carothers, "The Road to *The Reivers*," *A Cosmos of My Own: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1980*, ed. Doreen Fowler and Ann J. Abadie (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1981), 95–124. Also helpful are William Rossky, "*The Reivers*: Faulkner's *Tempest*," *Mississippi Quarterly*, 18 (Spring, 1965), 82–93; Judith B. Wittenberg, *Faulkner: The Transfiguration of Biography* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 236–48, as well as her "The Art of Ending," *New Directions in Faulkner Studies: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1983*, ed. Doreen Fowler and Ann J. Abadie (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1984), 358–79; Haney H. Bell, Jr., "The Relative Maturity of Lucius Priest and Ike McCaslin," *Aegis*, 2 (1973), 15–21.

[4] Wittenberg, *Faulkner*, 238.

[5] Mikhail Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and Chronotype in the Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 114. All future references to this discourse included in the text will be to this edition. See also Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984). Other helpful texts are Tzvetan Todorov, *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle*, trans. Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), and Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, trans. Vern W. McGee (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), especially the chapter entitled "The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historical Typology of the Novel)," 10–59.

in its more important moments of *crisis*: for showing *how an individual becomes other than what he was*" (Bakhtin, 115). Bakhtin here provides a critical theory that helps explain how and why a work such as *The Reivers* continues to release an unflagging, comic, heuristic vitality as it dramatizes the past and the present while proleptically implying the future. Yet Bakhtin's analysis of *The Golden Ass* is helpful for an understanding of *The Reivers* only to the extent that we realize the limitations and potentialities of his critical theory, since he is bound not only by his perspective of the history of the novel, or at least the novels, poetry and drama he was familiar with, but also by his Marxist political background. His penetrating remarks about heteroglossia, refraction, stratifications, and dialogism, however, transcend the cultures he explicitly dealt with; they emerge from a liberating notion of stylistics at the heart of the literary enterprise itself. In his seminal essay entitled "Discourse in the Novel," written in 1934–35, Bakhtin boldly situates the problem of stylistics in the modern novel: "The separation of style and language from the question of genre has been largely responsible for a situation in which only individual and period–bound overtones of a style are the privileged subjects of study, while the basic social tone is ignored" (Bakhtin, 259). Bakhtin stresses rather the multiform elements in style and the variform dimensions in speech and voice since he considers the opposing centripetal and centrifugal natures of language not as a system of grammatical categories but as partaking and expressing a world view. He indicates that a novel is composed of various elements, or "compositional–stylistic unities" (Bakhtin, 262), ranging from direct authorial literary–artistic narration to the stylistically individualized speech of characters, and when all the varied elements are treated separately and conjointly, then one can talk about dealing with unified meaning: "The novel orchestrates all its themes, the totality of the world of objects and ideas depicted and expressed in it, by means of the social diversity of speech types ... and by the differing individual voices that flourish under such conditions" (Bakhtin, 263).

In particular, Bakhtin sees specific words and phrases as rays of light having a "spectral dispersion in an atmosphere filled with the alien words, value judgments and accents through which the ray passes on its way toward the object; the social atmosphere of the word, the atmosphere that surrounds the object, makes the facets of the image sparkle" (Bakhtin, 277). Just as hetero– and polyglossic language point to answers, so too novels point in several directions at once: the past, the present, and the anticipated future, and take on a dynamic, responsive character to them. Each case functions as an "apperceptive background of understanding" (Bakhtin, 281) — as is valid in the relationship between *The Golden Ass*

and *The Reivers*.

The events portrayed in *The Reivers* — those on the road to Memphis, in Miss Reba's establishment and at the racetrack — reveal the psychological axis upon which Lucius Priest's life has rotated and continues to rotate, and though these events seemingly last a few short days, they have actually filled out and been determinative of what has transpired in a life that has lasted sixty–seven years so far. In addition, they become the potentially formative, surrogate experiences in the life of Lucius' grandson as the cumulative memory of the Priest family (representative of their entire oral history) is summed up and made available to its newest member(s). Both Lucius Priest and Lucius Apuleius are placed in unforeseen circumstances, and what Bakhtin notes about the external forces operative in the life of Lucius Apuleius could also be applied to the much younger Lucius Priest:

> Such an individual's potential for initiating actions is, however, not creative; it is realized only negatively, in rash and hasty acts, in mistakes, in guilt. ... The concreteness of this chronotype of the individual on the road permits everyday life to be realized within it. But this life is, so to speak, spread out along the edge of the road itself, and along the sideroads. The main protagonist and the major turning points of his life are to be found outside everyday life. He merely observes this life, meddles in it now and then as an alien force; he occasionally even dons a common and everyday mask — but in essence he does not participate in this life and is not determined by it. ... Playing the lowest role in the lowest level of society, Lucius does not participate internally in that life and is, therefore, in an even better position to observe it and study all its secrets. For him this is the experience of studying and understanding human beings. (Bakhtin, 119–22)

To some extent, this would account for the didactic and pedagogic nature of *The Reivers*, as Virtue and Non–virtue, in the tradition of Renaissance courtesy books, vie with each other. Moreover, the introduction of a newborn child at the novel's conclusion reflects a profound philosophy of the open–ended quality of life and literature. Though the Apuleian text opens out at the end, it still retains a coherent inner dimension that looks in on itself; Bakhtin maintains that the private nature of the Apuleian narrative causes it to be closed and opposed to public scrutiny, with the result that one can only spy or eavesdrop on it, as Otis and young Lucius Priest certainly do in *The Reivers*, in order to see how others live (Bakhtin, 123).

While both Luciuses are swept along by the conniving of others, neither Lucius is an unthinking being indifferent to the forces that surround him; the centers of the lives of the two Luciuses are kept in focus throughout primarily by first-person narrations, a technique that constantly allows the reader to have access to the moral center of the protagonists' lives. In addition, by limiting the focus of each story to a relatively short time,

one is not tempted to fall prey to any biographical fallacy, precisely because the larger stories are not portrayed, and prior and subsequent events only provide a context, not the text itself. The formative events in Lucius Apuleius' life, ones that from a psychological and spiritual point of view are most determinative of future growth, characterize what for Bakhtin are "the *exceptional*, utterly *unusual* moments of a man's life, moments that are very short compared to the whole length of a human life. But these moments *shape the definitive image of the man, his essence, as well as the nature of his entire subsequent life*" (Bakhtin, 116). In the case of Lucius Priest, where the odds of winning the horserace have been secretly manipulated by Ned, "there is no place for *ruinous chance*" (Bakhtin, 118).[6] Neither Apuleius nor Faulkner left his protagonists unprotected in the hands of cruel Fate.

Such benign manipulation of the human situation by the author insures that *The Reivers*, in particular, maintains a rather homogeneous comic tone, as the story constantly changes perspective and undergoes a living metamorphosis of its own as a result of the expanding and contracting nature of the narrator. The reader absorbs the narration of Lucius Priest, appreciates his past childhood experiences and listens to his present evaluations of those experiences that have been filtered and reshaped by myriad, implied, unspoken ones that have helped in the selectivity and interpretation of what Lucius wants to pass on; this sense of vibrant fullness is reinforced by the circular dimension of the novel as the protagonists return to Jefferson at the end of their adventures, a pattern repeated in the design of the racetrack itself, and in contrast to the conclusions of *As I Lay Dying* and *Light in August*, where the members of the new family units, away from familiar surroundings, have not totally bonded together. Though he might use a naive limited first–person–singular point of view, Lucius Priest matter–of–factly expands his identity by fusing it with his companions, so as to form a corporate identity with them, thus enlarging our sense of his humanity. At times, the narrator's "we" is "your great–grandfather and I" (*R*, 3), "Mother and us" (*R*, 43), "Everbe and Boon and I" (*R*, 162), "They" (*R*, 198), "Lightning and me" (*R*, 236), and "Uncle Parsham and his daughter and me" (*R*, 247). In addition, the reader implicitly realizes that the protagonists in the novel have undergone transformations themselves (one might think, for example, of Otis or Lucius Priest Hogganbeck), since like the aging Lucius

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[6] Bakhtin notes that, above all, comedy can free us: "Everything that makes us laugh is close at hand, all comical creativity works in a zone of maximal proximity. Laughter has the remarkable power of making an object come up close. ... Laughter demolishes fear and piety before an object, before a world, making it an object of familiar contact and thus clearing the ground for an absolutely free investigation of it" ("Epic and Novel", Bakhtin, 23).

Priest they have grown and changed and led lives we can only speculate about. Thus, the "real" narrative voice remains unrevealed, at a distance from the posited grandfatherly teller-of-the-tale insofar as this teller is at one and the same time an old man and a young boy and all the stages of his life between — suggesting, by this, various possible authoritative and nondirect authorial stances that can be most palpably sensed in and through the literary allusions woven into the story itself.

Working out from an apparent distinctive voice, we see that the various implied voices of the teller are in dialogue with one another within the text as they speak not only to Lucius Priest's grandson, but implicitly to the five mentioned in the dedication and to the real reader who perceives the wide range of harmony and dissonance. "Only polyglossia," Bakhtin notes, "fully frees consciousness from the tyranny of its own language and its own myth of language."[7] To a great extent, Faulkner achieves this polyglossia through a remarkable invention and orchestration of names. Not only do the people behind the names — Julius Caesar, Ty Cobb, Nathan B. Forrest, Barry Goldwater, Eleanor Roosevelt, Babe Ruth, and William T. Sherman — elicit historical responses based on our knowledge of the authenticated and mythic dimensions of their personalities, but their evoked presence roots the story in a host of time–bound relationships that are almost impossible to juxtapose in neat patterns. One could relate Ty Cobb and Babe Ruth, or Julius Caesar and William T. Sherman, but the mind resists allowing the collocation of Ty Cobb, Babe Ruth, and Julius Caesar; yet insofar as the imagination has to grope with these names in some way, they play off one another and are liberated from the text as the names take on a quality of their own. Likewise such fictional names as Mr. Ballott, Uncle Cal Bookwright, Christian, Sam Fathers, Little Chicago, Virgil, Luster, Minnie, Butch Lovemaiden (originally Lovelass), Mr. Buffaloe (originally Bullock), and Mr. Wordwin conjure up associations based either on our reading of other Faulkner texts or on the picture behind the word and its significance. Because these names do not settle easily into allegory or reinforce one another in relationships that lead us in one specific direction or another, they assume a nominal vitality whereby one does not have precedence over another, though once in motion in the story, these characters soon move beyond any frame we can devise for them.

In the name Lucius Priest, a happy associative derivation of both the progenitor Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin and Lucius Apuleius who became a priest, Faulkner brought about manifold references with names that existed in other of his novels and stories. Taken in a Coleridgean

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[7] "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse," in Bakhtin, 61.

way, Lucius' last name refers to a priest of the imagination who repeats the original creative act summed up in the words "I Am."[8] In a more explicitly dogmatic vein, a priest trans-signifies word and matter to create an eternal presence on earth. Perhaps Faulkner's most creative name in his final novel, one that surpasses the brilliance of Lena Grove or the pairing of Charles Bon/Jim Bond, is Everbe Corinthia; her creation "*e(x) verbe*" [*verbo*] relates her to the creative and redemptive Word uttered eternally by the Father as found in the prologue to the Gospel According to St. John where Jesus as the Christ contains all language — He is the *alpha* and the *omega* and all letters and words in between — ("*In principio erat Verbum, et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum*"), and indicates that her status of being a reformed whore has profound salvific Christian overtones. She represents a type of human being who lands in a less than fulfilling situation, and by making a resolution to reform her life and adjusting that situation to bring about an immediate unforeseen difficulty, she takes a circuitous route to arrive at a destination that will ultimately bring her the type of human companionship and familial existence that one has suspected all along she is worthy of and destined for. Similarly, her companion Vera partakes of the radiance of Everbe's inner beauty ("*Erat lux vera, quae illuminat omnem hominem venientem in hunc mundum*"). Everbe Corinthia ("Corrie") will "everbe" an avatar of Demeter, Persephone, and Kore, just as she will exist as the center of a productive society — the "ever bee." Each pronunciation of her name evokes a different aspect of her personality; her name is a mantra that has an aura of its own and summons forth a spirit that hovers over the woman we read about in the story. And it is precisely her nickname of Bee, like that of her competitor Birdie Watts and her future husband Boon *Hog*ganbeck (emphasis mine), that relates her to a larger bestiary that is integral to the cosmological significance of this novel.

Real and mythic animals and non–human creatures in Faulkner's world, as Monique Pruvot and others have noted, are at the semiotic core of many of his works. They leap from his fiction to form allusive, enigmatic carrousels that delight us and take us with them as they whorl about in their own mysterious Carcassonnian universe.[9] *The Reivers*, moreover, embodies the clearest example of a definite Faulkner bestiary, which links

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[8] See *The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956–59), II, 1196–97.

[9] See Monique Pruvot, "*Le Bestiaire*," *L'Arc* 84/85, (Le Revest–Saint–Martin: Edition le Jas, 1983), 144–56; Thomas L. McHaney, "The Development of Faulkner's Idealism: Hands, Horses, Whores," *Faulkner and Idealism: Perspectives from Paris*, ed. Michel Gresset and Patrick Samway, S.J. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1983), 71–85; John M. Howell, "Faulkner, Prufrock, and Agamemnon: Horses, Hell, and High Water," *Faulkner: The Unappeased Imagination*, ed. Glenn O. Carey (Troy, N.Y.: Whitston, 1980), 213–25.

the world of Yoknapatawpha and beyond to the factual and fanciful bestiaries of the Middle Ages. With tongue in cheek, Faulkner situates the horserace at Parsham, pronounced Possum (a name shared by the local black patriarch), the site of actual Tennessee bird–dog trials. The race itself, as Boon tells Ned, represents an absurd predicament. Prompted by considerations of this race, Lucius Priest uses the norm of intelligence as his criterion in judging five non–human creatures:

> In fact, I rate the mules second only to rats in intelligence, the mule followed in order by cats, dogs and horses last — assuming of course that you accept my definition of intelligence: which is the ability to cope with environment: which means to accept environment yet still retain at least something of personal liberty. (*R*, 121)

Here the variables in the equation — intelligence, coping, environment, and personal freedom — become concepts by which to judge the humanity of the major characters in this novel, though the equation works differently for each character. Everbe uses her intelligence most convincingly to cope with an environment in order to achieve a personal freedom conducive to growth and love. She becomes the Queen Bee of the hive, the one whom the drones need to look after if they are to survive at all, since she has the power to create others to continue their corporate existence. Though apparently at the center of this moral fictive universe, the bee surprisingly does not figure among the creatures in Faulkner's bestiary. Ironically, the horse is placed last:

> He can be tricked and cajoled by a child into breaking limbs or his heart too in running too far too fast or jumping things too wide or hard or high; he will eat himself to death if not guarded like a baby; if he had only one gram of the intelligence of the most backward rat, he would be the rider. (*R*, 122)

Not only does this description suggest the story's conclusion, but it links the horse with both the rat and the rider, a surrealist identity that only language can hold together.

In rating the mule second, though positioning him last in the explanatory presentation, Lucius Priest has forced the reader to rearrange these creatures in their proper sequential order, and then reevaluate them again. Above all, the mule, in words reminiscent of the Nobel Prize speech, "has conquered not only life but death too and hence is immortal" and can be forced to work though "he will work for you patiently for ten years for the chance to kick you once" (*R*, 123). This paean rephrases the longer tribute to the "Homer of the cotton fields" in *Sartoris*, and from the viewpoint of the narrator's affectivity he is placed first in the list of five. In restructuring this constellation, and repositioning the five creatures and their faults and attributes, the reader thus considers the mule both first

and second. He also recalls that Lightning (a.k.a. Coppermine) who wins over Acheron (called Akrum though originally Cerberus), a name that suggests the Greek Lower World — and indirectly refers us back to Everbe Corinthia and perhaps the amorphous sounding constable Mr. Poleymus, is not identical with Ned's former victorious mule. In looking at this constellation that is fixed in the final part of the Faulknerian empyrean, we think that we can connect the dots to form a composite picture, though what we discover is that one star may call attention to itself and thus obstruct temporarily our vision of the whole, and in turn be overshadowed by another as a series of flickering contradictions and paradoxes that threaten to obliterate not only each other but our view of the whole. Here truth waxes and wanes into a collection of mythological meanings whose common thread is intense calculated ambiguity, which changes perspective as both we and the earth move through the universe.

The final victory unites the ideal and the real, a boy and his family, a reformed prostitute and doting boyfriend, as the protagonists are transformed by the risks that they take in order to respond to deeper challenges and expectations within themselves. What has brought this about is Ned's conviction, accepted by others, that Lightning will so desire the sardine ("sour dean") that he will run as hard as he can. The incongruity of this baffles the ordinary reader who has no way of knowing whether or not horses even like small fish; the sardine, however, by itself is hardly important, yet it is essential for the success of the race and the happy conclusion of the novel. In filling in the final spaces of his own cosmos, Faulkner/Prospero hurled up new constellations by means of names, characters, and episodes he created in *The Reivers*.

James E. Carothers (Lawrence)

The Rhetoric of Faulkner's Later Fiction, and of Its Critics

To say that Faulkner's later fiction is decidedly "rhetorical" and to say that it has often had its severe critics for this reason is merely to say what we already know; to advance beyond this consensus requires a few brief stipulations. By "Faulkner's later fiction" I refer to those texts that he published (and, for the most part, *wrote*) after 1942. By "rhetoric" I mean primarily that Faulkner seems to have written this fiction with a definite awareness of his audience, and that he sought to affect this audience in some identifiable ways; secondarily I mean also that Faulkner selected particular narrative techniques to achieve his larger purposes. By "the critics" of this later fiction I mean, principally, its detractors. In what follows, I shall consider some of the principal charges against the later fiction, and suggest a few of the possible causes and consequences of Faulkner's later rhetorical stance.

To isolate our subject, consider a somewhat morbid speculative inquiry: suppose that in the summer of 1942, just after the publication of *Go Down, Moses*, Faulkner had realized his vain ambition to be accepted for military service, and suppose further that he had died "saying No to people like Hitler and Mussolini" (*T*, 218), rather than serving for the duration in bondage to Warner Bros. What would remain for us of "Faulkner," what would be the state of his reputation at present, what would be the present condition of Faulkner studies, and what texts of value that we now have would we lack? What would remain, surely, are the texts of the first twenty–plus years of Faulkner's literary career, consisting of a rather lengthy and labored apprenticeship in poetry, a transitional phase of derivative and experimental prose including the New Orleans pieces, *Soldiers' Pay, Mosquitoes*, and *Sartoris*, and finally the triumphant phase of "the major years,"[1] consisting of the fiction Faulkner produced from *The Sound and the Fury* through *Go Down, Moses*, on which the preponderance of his present reputation rests. It is much less certain just how Faulkner's

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[1] Melvin Backman, *Faulkner: The Major Years* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966). A more recent study repeating this emphasis is John Pilkington, *The Heart of Yoknaptawpha* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1981).

reputation might have developed (or failed to develop) in the absence of his post–1942 texts. Would there have been a *Portable Faulkner*, for example? Not likely, or if there had been one it would almost certainly have been very different from the text and "Introduction" that Malcolm Cowley produced with Faulkner's sometimes grudging assistance. In fact, Faulkner might still be waiting for his critical redeemer. The present state of Faulkner studies would, I think, be almost unrecognizable, lacking as it would a rather staggering amount of Faulkner's comments on his work as a whole and on many of his individual texts, including interviews, essays, letters, and a variety of other intertextual statements. What would we do, I wonder, without the Nobel Prize address, the Jean Stein interview, or the comments recorded in *Faulkner in the University,* to name only the most obvious. We would have to construct "a chiasmus of our own," rather than relying on the one(s) that Faulkner provided for us. What we would lack, most of all, are the fictional texts published in the later phase, the novels from *Intruder in the Dust* to *The Reivers*, and the organizing vision that presides over the short stories in *Knight's Gambit, Collected Stories,* and *Big Woods.*[2]

But Faulkner survived the war and he even survived Hollywood, so the present state of Faulkner's reputation and the present state of Faulkner studies reveal a rather striking and little–noticed paradox, namely, that over the last twenty years of his life Faulkner provided extensive and often invaluable commentary on his art, while during the same period he also produced a body of fiction that his reputation, by most accounts, would be better off without. The current solution to this paradox is usually to employ whatever portion of Faulkner's nonfictional commentary the critic finds useful to supplement the reading of the texts of "the major years," while simultaneously lamenting, regretting, denigrating, ignoring, or otherwise condescending to Faulkner's fiction of the later period.

I do not wish to contend that the novels from *Intruder in the Dust* to *The Reivers* are "better" than the novels from *The Sound and the Fury* to *Go Down, Moses*; that is a statement no sober man would make, nor any sane one believe. I propose, rather, to reverse the present process of exalting Faulkner's later public commentary while belittling his later fiction, or, if not to reverse the process, to alter its direction slightly, or, at least, to retard its motion for a few moments, by questioning some of the assumptions on which it seems to be based. What, exactly, are the charges against the later fiction? Consider first the observations of Malcolm

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[2] Most of the short stories in these three volumes were, of course, written by the time Faulkner published *Go Down, Moses,* though a few story texts post–date the novel, and the stories of *Big Woods* were substantially re–written.

Cowley. Revising *The Portable Faulkner* in 1967, Cowley chose to supplement his selection of Faulkner's fictional texts with only "The Courthouse (A Name for the City)" and "The Jail (Nor Even Yet Quite Relinquish–)", both from *Requiem for a Nun*, and both nicely consistent with Cowley's exposition of Faulkner's "Legend of the South."[3] In his "Afterword" to this new edition of the *Portable*, Cowley details a number of differences between Faulkner's earlier and later fiction. Recalling that in 1945 he had quoted with approval André Gide's remark that none of Faulkner's characters "properly speaking, has a soul," and that he had interpreted this to mean that "not one of them exercises the faculty of conscious choice between good and evil," in 1967 Cowley reconsiders: "*Though broadly true in 1945* [my emphasis], this statement would eventually be riddled with exceptions" (xxx). What is significant here, I would suggest, is not so much that Cowley finds choicemaking characters in Faulkner's later fiction, but that he is also modifying his earlier generalization. Could he have been thinking of Bayard Sartoris in the last chapter of *The Unvanquished*, of Harry Wilbourne choosing grief over nothing in *The Wild Palms*, of Ratliff in *The Hamlet*, or of Ike McCaslin in *Go Down, Moses*?

Cowley next asserts that, unlike the earlier fiction, Faulkner's later fiction provides characters between twenty and forty "who are meant to elicit not only sympathy but admiration" (xxxi). In this context he instances Nancy Mannigoe of *Requiem for a Nun*. Faulkner's villains, he continues, "forgo a little of their villainy, and one of them, Mink Snopes, becomes the real hero of *The Mansion*" (xxxi). Citing the title story of *Knight's Gambit*, *Intruder in the Dust*, and *Requiem for a Nun*, Cowley notes that "there are even happy endings of the conventional type" (xxxi). Though acknowledging the ways that the later Yoknapatawpha novels extend the County's history back to its origins and forward to the present, Cowley expresses the opinion that "they almost seem to be written by a different novelist," a novelist whose earlier "sense of doom and outrage" is replaced by "pity of human beings" and by "the obstinate faith" of the Nobel Prize address, and "more than a touch of old–fashioned sentiment." "I respect the later Faulkner," Cowley concludes, "with most of his demons exorcised, but the younger possessed and unregenerate author is the one whose works amaze us, as they never ceased to puzzle and amaze himself" (xxxi).

If Cowley can offer qualified respect to the later Faulkner, other critics

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[3] *The Portable Faulkner: Revised and Expanded Edition*, ed. Malcolm Cowley (New York: Viking, 1967). Quotations from Cowley's "Introduction" and "Afterword" in this edition are hereafter noted parenthetically. In addition to the two selections from *Requiem for a Nun*, Cowley also included the Nobel Prize address in the 1967 edition.

can't. In his savage review of *A Fable* Norman Podhoretz began by noting that *A Fable* might not be Faulkner's worst book, but that he declined to re–read *Pylon* to make the judgment definitive.[4] In *Love and Death in the American Novel* Leslie Fiedler attacked the earlier Faulkner for the "fullest and shrillest" expressions of misogyny in all of American literature, and the later Faulkner for having "committed himself to redeeming one by one all his anti–virgins." Fiedler here seems to me to try having it both ways, granting Faulkner nothing either way. "Faulkner's art fails him," Fiedler says, "when he turns from nausea and despair to sentimentality and maudlin pity; and even the popular mind rejects his attempts at converting his archetypes into the stereotypes of market–place culture."[5] The novelist Ellen Douglas objects that the later Faulkner "redeems hatred with sentimentality," and reports that she begins to lose interest in Faulkner when he begins in his middle age "to write glosses on himself."[6] And Eric J. Sundquist presents a sophisticated variant on "the major years" theme when he argues that the truly significant Faulkner begins with *Light in August* in 1932, rather than with *The Sound and the Fury* in 1929. "Appendix: Compson," in Sundquist's view, reveals "that the muse of Yoknapatawpha was in decline, that her author was struggling to extend his great design out of any odds and ends that he could dream up."[7]

And so it goes. The examples presented above do not include one representative of the frequent denunciations of Faulkner's later style, nor do

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4 Norman Podhoretz, "William Faulkner and the Problem of War: His Fable of Faith," *Commentary*, 18 (September, 1954), 227–32, reprinted in *William Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Robert Penn Warren (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice–Hall, 1966), 243–50.

5 Leslie A. Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (New York: Criterion, 1960), 309–15. The latter comment seems to be based, in part, on Fiedler's erroneous assumption that Faulkner wrote the screenplay for *The Long, Hot Summer*, Jerry Wald's film adaptation of *The Hamlet*.

6 Ellen Douglas, "Faulkner's Women," *'A Cosmos of My Own': Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1980*, ed. Doreen Fowler and Ann J. Abadie (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1981), 151.

7 Eric J. Sundquist, *Faulkner: The House Divided* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 4. "Faulkner's explorations of the issues of race conflict and miscegenation," Sundquist argues, "only come to the fore in and after *Light in August*, and one may justly divide his career in two, as I have done, recognizing one period to be devoted to a study of novelistic forms and the other to carrying those developed forms into a domain of greatest resonance" (5). We have, obviously, come some distance from Clifton Fadiman's contemporary review of *Absalom, Absalom!*, which concludes: "Seriously, I do not know what to say of this book except that it seems to point to the final blowup of what was once a remarkable, if minor talent" ("Faulkner, Extra–Special, Double–Distilled," *The New Yorker*, October 31, 1936; reprinted in *Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays*, 289–90). It would be instructive to catalogue the many obituaries for the "final blowup" of Faulkner's "remarkable, if minor talent," perhaps beginning with Horace Liveright's rejection of *Flags in the Dust* in 1927.

they include selections from any of the dozen or more books and hundreds of articles that offer one or more keys to Faulkner's fictional treasure without even mentioning any of the fiction written after 1942. And while occasional critics present favorable and astute readings of particular later texts or include the later fiction in a balanced reading of the whole career, they constitute but a small minority. Michael Millgate is virtually unique in speaking of Faulkner's later career in laudatory terms. "The triumph of Faulkner's later career," Millgate says, "from *The Hamlet* onwards, was the perfect marriage that resulted from a return to his original subject matter with the technical wisdom gained from the experimentation of the late twenties and early thirties."[8]

So the catalogue of charges against the later fiction is familiar enough — and we could perhaps sum up a great number of them by recalling that it was long ago argued that Faulkner's early prose was metaphoric while his later prose became discursive[9] — but a more general explanation of the cause for the discrepancies and contradictions between "the two Faulkners" remains to be provided, remembering that Faulkner himself was given both to justifying his changes and to denying that they were changes at all.

Once again Malcolm Cowley provides important comments. "Even his warm admirers," Cowley observed in the original "Introduction" to *The Portable Faulkner*, "have shown a rather vague idea of what he is trying to do; and Faulkner himself has never explained. He holds a rather curious attitude toward the public that appears to be lofty indifference ..., but really comes closer to being a mixture of skittery distrust and pure unconsciousness that the public exists" (xi). Quoting Faulkner's letter to him of January, 1946 — "I think I have written a lot and sent it off to print before I actually realized strangers might read it"[10] — Cowley describes the earlier Faulkner as "not so much composing stories for the public as telling them to himself — like a lonely child in his imaginary world, but also like a writer of genius" (xi). Here we have a clue to the dramatic change, the radical difference between Faulkner's essential rhetorical stance before and after 1942: whereas the former had little reason to believe that he had a substantial, intelligent, or wide audience, and had painful evidence that he lacked such an audience, the latter was given myriad reasons to believe that he was indeed being read, sometimes

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8 Michael Millgate, "'A Cosmos of My Own': The Evolution of Yoknapatawpha," *Fifty Years of Yoknapatawpha: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1979*, ed. Doreen Fowler and Ann J. Abadie (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1980), 36.

9 Joseph Gold, *Faulkner: A Study in Humanism: From Metaphor to Discourse* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966).

10 For the entire letter of which this is the last sentence, see Malcolm Cowley, *The Faulkner–Cowley File: Letters and Memories, 1944–62* (New York: Viking, 1966), 80.

even with sympathy, admiration, and understanding, and that he might be heard as well.

What led Faulkner to discover his audience? Though there are many causes rather than one, the appearence of the appreciative and industrious Cowley was portentous, signaling the beginning of that time in Faulkner's career when he occasionally agreed to cooperate and even to collaborate with some of his interpreters and interviewers, rather than invariably ignoring, insulting, or misleading them. Faulkner's first letter in response to Cowley's offer to write about his work shows how urgent was Faulkner's need for an audience:

> I would like very much to have the piece done. I think (at 46) that I have worked too hard at my (elected or doomed, I don't know which) trade, with pride but I believe not vanity, with plenty of ego but with humility too (being a poet, of course I gave no fart for glory) to leave no better mark on this our pointless chronicle than I seem to be about to leave.[11]

The publication and favorable reception of the *Portable*, Faulkner's eventual escape from Hollywood, the sale of *Intruder in the Dust* to MGM, among the events of the late forties, bespoke Faulkner's potential influence, and the Nobel award confirmed it. If it is no wonder that Faulkner felt remote, isolated, and ignored in the early forties, neither should it be any wonder that he mounted so many of the various platforms offered to him forever after. The real wonder, in light of the public and private demands of the last dozen years of his life, is that Faulkner managed to write any fiction at all.

Consider, for example, the sheer quantity of public statement Faulkner produced after 1942. Of the material gathered in *Essays, Speeches & Public Letters*, all twelve essays, thirteen of the fourteen public speeches, one introduction, one book review, and 28 of the 31 public letters date from the later period. In the matter of interviews, eighteen of the 29 collected in *Lion in the Garden*, the numerous public question–and–answer sessions at Virginia partially recorded in *Faulkner in the University,* and the reading and commentary reported in *Faulkner at West Point* are among the many public performances of Faulkner's later phase.

In fact, almost the whole of Faulkner's life after 1942 seems infested with public and private distractions from the craft of fiction. Faulkner

[11] *The Faulkner–Cowley File*, 7. For another indication of Faulkner's developing reputation, see his letter to Cowley of October 5, 1945: "Yes, I had become aware of Faulkner's European reputation. The night before I left Hollywood I went (under pressure) to a party. I was sitting on a sofa with a drink, suddenly realized I was being pretty intently listened to by three men whom I then realized were squatting on their heels and knees in a kind of circle in front of me. They were Isherwood, the English poet, and a French surrealist, Hélion; the other one's name I forget. I'll have to admit though I felt more like a decrepit gaffer telling stories than like an old master producing jewels for three junior co–laborers" (*The Faulkner–Cowley File*, 391).

served five terms in Hollywood during this period, not counting a short sabbatical in the fleshpots of Egypt on an ostensible Hollywood project (Howard Hawks' film *Land of the Pharaohs)* and some incidental involvement with the filming of *Intruder in the Dust*, for a total, by my calculations, of over 26 months of work. From 1950 on he collected at least seven major awards for the body of his fiction or for particular texts, often taking a trip and making a speech in the process. He completed what must have been an exhausting itinerary, traveling for a variety of reasons to Stockholm, France, England, New York, Cambridge, Mass., New Orleans, Norway, Princeton, Stresa, St. Moritz, Rome, Paris, Brazil, Washington D.C., Oregon, Montana, Japan, the Philippines, Iceland, Athens, and Venezuela, to say nothing of frequent trips between Oxford and Memphis, Oxford and Charlottesville, and, inevitably, Oxford and Byhalia. This is not to say that he undertook each of these trips out of laudable motives, in a cheerful spirit of public service, nor that he behaved admirably in each of these places. He did not. And what we know of his troubled domestic and undomestic affairs, of his physical pains, and of his long–running battle with alcohol stands in sharp contrast to the "sentimentality" of his later fiction. Without attempting to assess any of his individual performances, or to do summary to this whole phase of his life, it is enough to conclude that the later Faulkner was almost always busy, and that he was almost never allowed to forget the fact that he had an audience.

What effects did this new sense of audience have on the rhetoric of Faulkner's later fiction? I shall propose some brief suggestions, rather than a comprehensive answer, for if it is difficult and hazardous to insist upon any unequivocal equations between events in Faulkner's turbulent private life and his apocryphal sublimations of them in the fiction of "the major years," it may be similarly difficult and equally hazardous to attempt to assign any thorough system of correspondences between Faulkner's pronouncements as a public figure and the fictional texts of the later phase. Nevertheless, I would suggest that there is an important general correspondence between the two in that in both his fiction and non–fiction of the later phase, Faulkner does, in Ellen Douglas's phrase, "write glosses on himself." The later fiction is rich in instances in which Faulkner looks back at his earlier fiction, sums it up, makes revisionist comments on it, adds and subtracts from it, or incorporates it by reference. "Appendix: Compson" is an important manifestation of this phenomenon, as are the prose sections of *Requiem for a Nun*, the 1954 pieces "Sepulture South: Gaslight" and "Mississippi," the *tour de force* of Gavin Stevens' radiating vision near the end of *The Town*, and much of the matter of *The Mansion* and *The Reivers*. The non–fiction, of course, consists almost entirely of such glosses. Of these I should like to mention two. The writer who fails

to learn the eternal verities, Faulkner said at Stockholm, "labors under a curse. He writes not of love but of lust, of defeats in which nobody loses anything of value, of victories without hope and, worst of all, without pity or compassion. His griefs grieve on no universal bones, leaving no scars. He writes not of the heart but of the glands" (*ESPL*, 120). This is surely Faulkner talking about Faulkner, rather than Faulkner talking about Hemingway or Mickey Spillane. The second gloss is in his parodic echo of Harry Wilbourne in the Jean Stein interview, "Between scotch and nothing, I'll take scotch" (*LG*, 240). A writer who can make a good joke of the tag–line to a novel that had cost him such anguish is, I submit, a writer worth reading, and re–reading, just as Faulkner himself was constantly re–reading (though not often, apparently, the printed text) and re–writing the continuing text of himself.

This re–writing was a constant, and a constantly evolving process in Faulkner's career, but it is by no means confined to the texts of his life and art after 1942. We have learned to re–read his preface to the Modern Library *Sanctuary*, to read and re–read his two prefaces to *The Sound and the Fury*. Similarly, we repeatedly re–read the implied text between *Sartoris* and *The Sound and the Fury*, between *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!*, and between "Carcassonne" and *These 13*, "Carcassonne" and *Collected Stories*, or any other pair of his texts. The later fiction is a valuable gloss on the fiction of "the major years" precisely because it contains and corrects the former at the same time that it both celebrates and undercuts itself. It does so principally through two voices, distinct and indistinguishable: the voice of the omniscient narrator and the voice of Yoknapatawpha's Nestor, Gavin Stevens. Gavin is, after all, perhaps the spokesman of the later Faulkner, to the extent that he embodies and expresses all of the strengths and all of the weaknesses — the sentiment, the bombast, the choice–making, the happy ending, the affirmation, courage, faith, self–reflexivity and self–contradiction — of the later platform Faulkner. To give authority to Faulkner's essays and interviews of the later years while disregarding the fiction of the same period seems to me to be like reading the story of Thomas Sutpen through the chronology Faulkner appended to *Absalom, Absalom!* while disregarding the stories and story–telling of Miss Rosa, Quentin and Shreve.

Michael Millgate (Toronto)

Faulkner: Is There a "Late Style"?

This paper is in certain respects a continuation of the one I gave at the Izu conference in Japan in 1985. That was a short paper, and this is even shorter, but I cherish a secret hope that over a series of future conferences I can gradually accumulate the material for an offering of something like the conventional academic length. The trouble is that the now established pattern of a progressively reducing time–period for each performance holds out rather a prospect of infinite recession, of having eventually to discover what it *really* means to try and say it all "between one Cap and one period," to "put it all, if possible, on one pinhead" (*SL*, 185).

When we use the term "late style," of course, we customarily refer to the work done by an artist in old age, and it is manifestly clear that Faulkner did not live into what we currently think of as old age. When he died in 1962 he was still less than sixty–five years old, he had retained a passionate allegiance to the physical as well as to the mental life, and he had just published an intensely vital comic novel. It has been customary in these circumstances to think of Faulkner's creative life as having been brutally cut short, to take it for granted that his career did not extend to the kind of final, consciously pre–posthumous stage at which writers characteristically look back over their past life and work and subject both to processes of revision — correcting or radically reconsidering their texts, writing new prefaces that indicate how they now think their early books should be read, composing their memoirs, destroying or selectively preserving their personal papers, choosing their future biographers, and so on.

What I argued in Japan, however, was that Faulkner's winning the Nobel Prize at the distinctly early age of fifty–three served in effect to render him prematurely old, both by suggesting that his work, having been crowned, was by that same token somehow "capped," completed and closed off, and by burdening him with the role of an elder statesman of letters, hence with a new sense of responsibility not just towards his art (*that* responsibility he had always accepted) but towards his region (then embroiled in the civil rights struggle), towards his country (then embattled in the "cold war"), and towards what he believed to be the shared

values of the "free world."

I do not mean to suggest that the Nobel Prize was the sole determinant in Faulkner's life and work during the 1950s and early 1960s. *Intruder in the Dust*, for example, predates the Prize and provides in so doing a sufficiently clear indication that Faulkner could not in any case have remained silent in a time of racial crisis. It's also conceivable — despite the initially negative American reaction to the Nobel Prize award — that the State Department might eventually have discovered the world's valuation of William Faulkner and so got around to the idea of using him as a roving politico–cultural ambassador. But the Prize made it harder for Faulkner to say no to such involvements and (what was by no means the same thing) easier to say yes, to feel justified in the consequent distraction of his energies from those specifically literary tasks to which he had earlier dedicated himself with so potent a combination of intensity and persistence.

I think it is fair to say — as a matter of critical and not of moral judgment — that after the prize Faulkner was easier on himself as a writer, by which I mean not that he was less scrupulous about the details of his prose (rather the reverse, in fact) but that he wrote with less urgency and passion, a reduced sense of the need to get down on paper all that he had thought and imagined. Perhaps that was because, quite irrespective of the Nobel Prize, the author who had declared in his thirties that nothing would ever again move him so powerfully as the image of Caddy's muddy drawers had arrived in his fifties at the realization that he had already said what he most wanted to say and was now engaged in acts essentially of amplification, explication, and affirmation — of reaffirmation, indeed, and even of repetition. It is in any case a long way from the sustained and almost rapturous engagement that seems to have produced a novel like *The Sound and the Fury* to the vision, sardonically captured by a reporter for the *New Yorker*, of Faulkner revising *A Fable* amid the bustle of Saxe Commins' Random House office, the words coming so slowly that it was if he were typing every letter of them for the first time (see *LG*, 76).

James Snead, in his recent book, *Figures of Division: William Faulkner's Major Novels*, is critical of Faulkner's late style on the grounds that it lacks the complexity of his earlier writing, that it becomes explanatory and didactic rather than exploratory and implicative, and that it tends to reinvoke in merely mechanical fashion the phrases and tropes that had once served as instruments of discovery — defamiliarization yielding place, as he neatly puts it, to domestication.[1] Those points are, I think, well taken,

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[1] James A. Snead, *Figures of Division: William Faulkner's Major Novels* (New York: Methuen, 1986), 216.

although they are perhaps more directly applicable to *Requiem for a Nun* (a work not discussed in *Figures of Division*) and to *A Fable* than to *The Town, The Mansion*, and *The Reivers*. Much depends, clearly, upon how "late" is to be defined. Sharp and stark though the end of Faulkner's late period may be, its beginning is very much open to debate: James Snead dates it from the writing of the Compson Appendix; James Carothers, elsewhere in this collection, chooses the publication of *Go Down, Moses;* I have myself taken the Nobel Prize as a convenient, though not inevitable, turning point. But however long or short one reckons the late period to have been, what does seem clear is that it can't, or shouldn't, be treated as monolithic, generalized into a consistency it does not in fact possess.

Although it is true that in the first post–Nobel years Faulkner devoted himself primarily to the completion of work already in progress, representing in many respects the culmination (perhaps also the final exhaustion) of patterns, themes, techniques, and aspirations visible throughout his career, I think it is also fair to say that after he had gained a measure of freedom with the publication of *A Fable* he to a considerable extent tried to make himself over as a writer, at least in minor ways. It's worth keeping in mind, for example, that *The Town*, Faulkner's nearest approach to a "social" novel of the conventional kind, was the product of that same phase of intense socio–political engagement, extending from late 1954 to late 1956, during which he did most of his overseas traveling, gave the bulk of his interviews, and wrote almost all of his polemical essays. That activist strain in his life and writing then became progressively less evident during the final period, from the beginning of 1957 onwards, spent so largely in the affluent context of Albemarle County, Virginia, and it seems appropriate enough that the main products of those years should have been first *The Mansion*, clearly a more genial work, and secondly *The Reivers,* unmistakably a most genial work, its opening "Grandfather said" signaling, in combination with its dedication to its author's actual grandsons, the final erosion of that classically modernist impersonality which as late as *A Fable* Faulkner had struggled to maintain with a rigidity that threatened to turn the book to stone, and himself along with it.

The Reivers was, of course, the only entirely new book Faulkner wrote after the Nobel Prize — and even that assertion rests on the assumption that the "Huck Finn" novel projected in 1940 never got beyond the "idea" stage at that time (see *SL*, 216). Despite this difference in its status, it is susceptible to at least some of James Snead's strictures by virtue of its persistent and often didacticized returns to the world of *Sanctuary* and other early works. What it does not so clearly justify, on the other hand, is his suggestion that whereas the early style had sprawled, the late style

characteristically "condenses."[2] This can, I think, be true only in the sense that the later novels may be said to display a greater degree of rhetorical control: the style is certainly contained, deliberate, reined in, but that does not necessarily prevent it from becoming redundant and repetitious, almost agonizingly prolix at times in its strenuous pursuit of unattainable goals of ideal abstract formulation.

The typescripts of the late novels bear ample witness to Faulkner's characteristic habit, at this stage of his career, of backing off from local difficulties encountered during the composition process and returning right to the beginning of the passage in question in order to take a second run at it, even to the extent of removing the sheet from the typewriter and inserting a new one. (There's some subliminal advertising here for the Garland *William Faulkner Manuscripts* series.) As often as not he would not revise the text leading up to the point at which he had broken off but essentially recopy it, almost as if he hoped that by re–covering that same ground at some speed he would build up a creative momentum sufficient to carry him through whatever had proved troublesome at the first encounter. Sometimes, and especially in *A Fable*, there appear in the text as published whole sequences of alternative articulations of the same essential idea, their overall effect quite the reverse of the kind of driving intensification produced in earlier novels by the dense accretion of reduplicative yet not quite synonymous adjectives.

In such passages one becomes simultaneously aware of Faulkner's unyielding ambition for his own work and of his profound uncertainty as to how far and how long he could continue an effective pursuit of that ambition. On the one hand, awareness of past accusations of rhetorical extravagance and stylistic formlessness seems to have led, in the more leisurely creative circumstances of the 1950s, to an excessive and perhaps self–defeating concern for the rhetorical and stylistic detail of works still in progress. On the other hand, Faulkner's letters of the period hint frequently at the fear that he might have written himself out, so that it is even possible to think that — consciously or unconsciously — he dawdled over the completion of *A Fable* because of a real doubt as to whether he would ever write anything else, typing each letter, therefore, not as if for the first time but as if for the last. Even that method of revision I've just described as characteristic of the late novels could be seen as an excuse for dilatoriness, a momentary restful distraction from creativity into mere retyping, hence a technique for slowing down the progress of the work and delaying its completion.

The Reivers, of course, showed that Faulkner had not in fact written

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[2] Snead, 215.

himself out. At the same time, it suggested that he had in a sense written himself through — worked out of his system both the artificial ambitions pursued in *A Fable* and the long–standing Yoknapatawphan obligations observed in *The Town* and *The Mansion*. It is not my business now, or perhaps ever, to speculate on what Faulkner might have written after *The Reivers*, but I ought perhaps to make some attempt to fulfill the immediate contract implicit in my title. Let me then quickly offer an answer to my question, and in terms that will perhaps encourage you not so much to look disappointedly back on the little I have said as to look eagerly forward to my altogether richer, denser, crisper contributions to those breathless microconferences of the future. Question: Is there a "late style"? Answer: Yes, but.

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Absalom, Absalom!: A Postmodernist Approach

1. Perspective in Criticism

As Albert Guerard remarks, "A prevailing tendency of Faulkner criticism has been to shrug off or minimize his playful eccentricities of form and style, and emphasize instead more familiar interests: sociological, ethical, psychological — a tendency, that is, to 'normalize' and intellectualize the wayward, render it orderly and safe."[1] Since 1976, when these lines were published, a certain shift has taken place in criticism towards recognizing and analyzing the "eccentric" and "wayward" in Faulkner. Critics emphasize the poetic character of Faulkner's style, the "incredulous narration" in *Absalom, Absalom!*, his "self–reflexive novel," its "desperate eloquence"; what interests critics is "the evocation of 'Voice,'" or the "Narrative Frames" and "Point of View" in *Absalom, Absalom!*.[2] The shift is from problems of the "story" to those of the "discourse,"[3] from

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1 Albert J. Guerard, "Faulkner: Problems of Technique," in his *The Triumph of the Novel: Dickens, Dostoevsky, Faulkner* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 204. See Olga Vickery, *The Novels of William Faulkner: A Critical Interpretation* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1961), 181; Cleanth Brooks, *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), 295–324; and "The Narrative Structure of *Absalom, Absalom!*," *Georgia Review* (Summer, 1975), 301–28; *Twentieth Century Interpretations of* Absalom Absalom!, ed. Arnold Goldmann (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971). For the experience and concept of history in *Absalom, Absalom!* see, e.g., Ursula Brumm, "Geschichte als Geschehen und Erfahrung: Eine Analyse von William Faulkners *Absalom, Absalom!*" *Archiv für das Studium der Neueren Sprachen*, 204(1967/68), 26–50; Martin Christadler, "William Faulkners *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936): Geschichte, Bewußtsein und Transzendenz — Das Ende des historischen Romans," *Anglistik und Englischunterricht*, 24 (1984), 51–66.

2 Lothar Hönnighausen, "The Novel as Poem: The Place of Faulkner's *Absalom Absalom!* in the History of Reading," *Amerikastudien/American Studies*, 31 (1986), 127–40; Peter Brooks, "Incredulous Narration: *Absalom, Absalom!*," *Comparative Literature*, 34 (1982), 247–68; R. Rio–Jelliffe, "*Absalom, Absalom!* As Self–Reflexive Novel," *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, 11 (1981), 75–90; Deborah Robbins, "The Desperate Eloquence of *Absalom Absalom!*," *Mississippi Quarterly*, 34 (1981), 314–24; Stephen M. Ross, "The Evocation of Voice in *Absalom Absalom!*," *Essays in Literature*, 19 (1981), 135–49; Paul Rosenzweig, "The Narrative Frames in *Absalom Absalom!*: Faulkner's Involuted Comment on Art," *Arizona Quarterly*, 35 (Summer, 1979), 135–51; Thomas E. Connolly, "Point of View in Faulkner's *Absalom Absalom!*," *Modern Fiction Studies*, 27 (1981), 255–72.

3 Cf. Joseph W. Reed, *Faulkner's Narrative* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973); Dieter

self–centered "poetic" structure to open reader response, from proving coherence of argument to acknowledging Faulkner's conscious endeavor to leave or even establish gaps, discontinuities, breaks and contradictions in his narrative.

What often appears as — in Guerard's terms — "eccentric" in Faulkner's novels, a "wayward" overdoing of narrative complications (to be finally contained in the unity of narrative structure), might gain importance in a time that is no longer governed by the modern ideology of the esthetic whole, and be seen as a sign of deliberate dissolution instead of mere complication. Or, in other words: of the two aspects of modern literary structure, (1) ambiguity and irony on the one side (as recognition of epistemological and ethical complications), and (2) coherence and unity on the other (as signs of the belief in the possibility of a meaningful and totalizing esthetic synthesis), the postmodern standpoint might comprehend and even appreciate more easily the characteristics of multiplicity and indeterminacy, i.e., the suspensive or even deconstructive traits in the narrative form, rather than the integrating and constructive ones.[4] The modern pursuit of esthetic unity might appear to the reader in the eighties less an achievement than a futile attempt destined to dissolve into partiality and discontinuity. Contemporary authors like John Barth, Robert Coover, Thomas Pynchon and others have prepared the reader for such a view by transforming the (historical) novel into often merely playful syntheses which — in complicated narrative processes — are dynamically deconstructed and reconstructed, so that they lose their epistemological basis and melt "reality," "truth," and fiction into one another. The viewpoint of the eighties recognizes in *Absalom, Absalom!* an amazing sense of (uncommitting and relativizing) "play," which paradoxically arises directly

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Meindl, *Bewußtsein als Schicksal: Zu Struktur und Entwicklung von William Faulkners Generationsromanen* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1974); Arthur F. Kinney, *Faulkner's Narrative Poetics: Style as Vision* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1978); Donald M. Kartiganer, *The Fragile Thread: The Meaning of Form in Faulkner's Fiction* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1979); Bernd Ostendorf, "*Absalom, Absalom!*," *Der amerikanische Roman*, ed. H.J. Lang (Düsseldorf: Bagel, 1972), 249–75; C. Brodsky, "The Working of Narrative in *Absalom, Absalom!*," in *Amerikastudien/American Studies*, 23 (1978), 240–59; James H. Matlack, "The Voices of Time: Narrative Structure in *Absalom Absalom!*," *Southern Review*, 15 (1979), 333–54; Philip J. Egan, "Embedded Story Structures in *Absalom Absalom!*," *American Literature*, 55 (1983), 199-214.

4 For a systematic discussion of the views on modernism and postmodernism see Gerhard Hoffmann, Alfred Hornung, Rüdiger Kunow, "'Modern,' 'Postmodern' and 'Contemporary' as Criteria for the Analysis of 20th Century Literature," *Amerikastudien/American Studies*, 22 (1977), 19–46. See also Stephen Spender, *The Struggle of the Modern* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 117. Of course there are many modernisms and one can speak, as Geoffrey Hartman does, of the "Maze of Modernism" (*Beyond Formalism: Literary Essays, 1958–70* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970], 258). Here a contrasting of general traits may suffice for the focusing of a postmodern critical perspective.

out of an overstretching of the modern concepts of absoluteness, i.e., alienation, identity, truth and art as the highest or absolute form of truth.

Absalom, Absalom! does not attain esthetic unity in a strict, modern sense based on confidence in art and its ability to depict the truth — though that is Faulkner's most ambitious goal (see below). The reason, one might presume, lies in the fact that not just the workings of consciousness and the broadening of awareness are made the focus of the novel (as in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*), but consciousness of *history* together with its always problematic integration into the concept of the self and its *identity*. This demands the personal integration of present and past by memory, rational argument, intuition and imagination and therefore the integration of two poles, an outer and an inner one, which nevertheless are not allowed to melt into one (i.e., consciousness), but have to stay apart, history serving as the independent frame of reference which is established through narration. This tension causes a deconstruction of both history and the identity of the self and foreshadows the postmodern conception of history as fiction. In order to reveal the logic of this process, a few general remarks about history and the novel have to be made.

2. Narration: History and Fiction

The narrative organization of history and the integration of past and present, the history of the South and that of the Southern individual, of the outer and the inner, cause two problems. The first problem is *narration of the past*, narrative as appropriation of history. It has two aspects. Narration is the fundamental category for the *perception* and mental organization of history because history in a general sense is time in the past and "time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode."[5] At the same time narration is the form of *writing* history. Thus there is a primary and secondary organization of history through narration. Both "stages" or "layers" of the narrative organization of history proceed in their appropriation of the historical "object" by selection, combination, substitution, and context building (Jakobson). Narration of history is, thus, a mental construct, and that in three ways: (1) it sets as "existent" the object "history" whose primary form, i.e., the stream of happenings in physical time, it can never reach and repeat; (2) it builds (causal and teleological) consistencies in its conception that the presupposed object history does not necessarily have; and (3) it "ideologically" structures the story that (re)presents history. With this differentiation

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[5] Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 52; see also 3.

between object and mediation, a number of epistemological questions are raised concerning the relationship between history as object, narration as (ap)perception, and narration as writing: Can the narrative construct be correlated to its intended historical object mimetically or, if that in a strict sense is not possible, can there still be a "fusion of [the] horizons"[6] of subject and object, present and past? Furthermore, does narration dominate history or can (the idea of) history also come to dominate its narration as a kind of mythic force; or does the enigma of history even make narration impossible? And finally, is the idea or experience of writing history necessary for the establishment of what one might call reality and, with it, identity of the self?[7]

Turning around the perspective and arguing from the textual basis, the three levels of appropriating history as a mental construct find their equivalent in *three levels of explanation* which are based upon one another and which decode one another.[8]

(1) The first is the level of primary *occurrences* in an irreversible mechanical time flow, a continuity of change; it guarantees to whatever is happening the status of "actuality," which, of course, is not the same as documented historical "truth."

(2) Then there is the first level of narrative conceiving of history as the *story* (which is still an abstraction of the written text). It is a level of higher consistency, of making sense out of what has happened; it connects, motivates, gives reasons. It isolates "events" which are supposed to "stand out" or, rather, are taken out of the stream of physical time as "structured," meaningful, but "open" units.[9] To this conceptualizing of history also belongs the notion that there is not only a surface, but also a deep structure of history, a matrix, or principle of creation that transforms itself according to its laws and regulations of operation into multiple, indeed endless numbers of surface structures which form history as

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6 Hans–Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1960).

7 See for a discussion of the theoretical problems of historiography, its various conflicting methods, the place of narration and the concept of fiction in writing and reading history, for instance, Hayden White, *Metahistory* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973); *Geschichte, Ereignis, Erzählung*, ed. Reinhart Koselleck and Wolf–Dieter Stempel, Poetik und Hermeneutik V (München: Fink Verlag, 1973); Arthur C. Danto, *Narration and Knowledge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

8 Karlheinz Stierle has made this distinction between "Geschehen, Geschichte, Text der Geschichte" (in *Geschichte, Ereignis, Erzählung*, 530–35), which is here used in a different line of argument.

9 See for the concept of "event" or "Ereignis" the discussion in *Geschichte, Ereignis, Erzählung*, 535–89, especially Hans Robert Jauss, "Versuch einer Ehrenrettung des Ereignisbegriffs," 554–60.

a succession of happenings.[10] The main problem that arises with this distinction of system and performance, or in terms of time, permanence and change, is the question of priority. The answer to this question is already part of the organization of history, but at the same time it is more, because the postulation of a deep structure assumes a double reality status of history.

(3) Finally, one has to distinguish between the (abstracted) conceptualizing of the story, i.e., the story of history, and its linguistic concretization in terms of "showing" and "telling" (Booth) and its "ideologization" in the plot, i.e., in the *text of the story*. The latter might be seen as a "decoding" or "explaining" of the psychological, sociological, and historical coherences and consistencies of the narrated historic story and of the succession and actuality (or non–actuality) of the happenings and the idea of history, its deep structure. Whatever remains as gaps on the level of unstructured happenings in the continuity of change and their conceptualization into narrative appears as points of indefiniteness in the story and consequently as doubts and question marks in its text that can lead to a deconstruction of the actuality and idea of history.

It seems that these three levels of explanation are not so much demanded by the object "history" as by the claim to make sense, i.e., to tell the "truth," "because narrative, conceived as a 'socially symbolic act,' ... by its *form* alone, rather than by the specific 'contents' ..., endows events with meaning."[11] The modal quality of the "actual" (in contrast to the merely possible) and the idea of a necessary unity of history are aspects of this "meaning." But even meaning or truth change their nature. They can, as will be seen in *Absalom, Absalom!*, under epistemological complications expand to include the possible, which might become the "really" real and true, of which actuality and substance are then only variable forms.

The text of the story is formed by what has come to be called the *discourse*, which comprises the temporal ordering of the story, the knowledge, attitude and perspective put to and incorporated in it by the narrator(s) and the author respectively, and the linguistic realization of the story, which again offers many possibilities, ranging from a plain, forward–directed narrative to a metaphorically or rhetorically complicated style that retards the reading process (as in *Absalom, Absalom!*). Here, in the discourse, the novel obviously has greater freedom of "play." The his-

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[10] See William Dray, *Laws and Explanations in History*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 156–69; Algirdas Julien Greimas, "Sur l'histoire fondamentelle," *Geschichte, Ereignis, Erzählung*, 139–53.

[11] White, "Getting Out of History," *Diacritics*, 12 (1982), 3.

toriographical text tries to suppress as much as possible of the subjectivity still extant, while the novel can make the subjectivity of the narrators, of their perceiving, conceiving and evaluating the "facts" of history, one of its main goals and attractions, even its theme. However, if it does so, the truth value of what happened has to be verified not only on the level of actual happenings but also by the experiences and explicit judgment of the narrators, who may themselves become characters in the story (which is the case in *Absalom, Absalom!*). The second complication with narrating history in the novel is situated in the discourse, for the "truth" of events on all levels can be challenged not only by directly questioning the actuality status of events, but also through the (disruptive) form or failure of its narration.

3. Narration: History and Identity

Narration is not only the means to call up history and to make it meaningful or at least understandable, it is on an anthropological level, as Umberto Eco reminds us, also the only way to call up a person's own past, his own history.[12] The only manner in which we can present to our mind our own past and thereby our own continuity and identity is to remember situations which connect into a story. These situations are, of course, embedded in the general context of history. There are often unbridgable discontinuities in personal history that result in the impossibility of forming the remembered and imagined situations into a coherent story. This deficit might tempt the person to turn for assistance to explanations from general history or to expand his or her story into the stories of other people who lived in the past with whose lives his or her own life connects.

Again, as in narrating non–personal history, two problems arise. First, as Danto argues in his analytical philosophy of history, history can only be something that is a matter of the past, i.e., something that has ended.[13] On the other hand, historical narrative is the medium of identification, of the fusion of one's own (present) identity with that of others in the past. The purpose of this *historic–genetic identification* is the understanding and the preservation of one's personal self through an interchange with the past. For Quentin Compson, the chief narrator in *Absalom, Absalom!*, this relating of history to the present, his own present, is his existential concern.

In addition to the first problem, which lies in the connection of past and present, history and identity, the second has something to do with the attitude with which such an interrelationship is sought. Narration, as it

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12 Umberto Eco, *Das offene Kunstwerk* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973), 202.

13 Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 12.

calls up the past, means a detachment from the restraints and coercions of one's life. Quentin and Rosa Coldfield do not really have this detachment and restraint. Quentin knows that he cannot escape from the present and that what he wants to know, the connecting link between past and present, is never really attainable, at least not in straight narration, only in "that logic and reason–flouting quality of a dream which the sleeper knows must have occurred, stillborn and complete, in a second" (*AA*, 22). In "talking, telling" (*AA*, 22) the drift of time, the enigma of personalities and the unexplainability of events, their quality of openness and surprise calls forth a notion of history which is characterized not by continuity but by *discontinuity*, which can be surmounted only in dream.

For Faulkner, however, this discontinuity of history, as it appears in all narrators' versions of the Sutpen story, does not finally impair the concept of truth. Whatever truth there might be, is a truth of *aspects* (of time, characters, events, history). It is not attainable by a single narrated person or a narrator who always remains within his own field of experience or conjecture. Only the reader can experience it, as Faulkner himself stated in a famous remark on *Absalom, Absalom!*. A student at the University of Virginia asked Faulkner: "... does any one of the people who talks about Sutpen have the right view, or is it more or less a case of thirteen ways of looking at the blackbird with none of them right?" Faulkner's answer is perfectly clear:

> That's it exactly. I think that no one individual can look at the truth. It blinds you ... . But the truth, I would like to think, comes out, that when the reader has read all these thirteen different ways of looking at the blackbird, the reader has his own fourteenth image of that blackbird which I would like to think is the truth. (*FU*, 273–74)

This is Faulkner's modernist ideology of truth rendered in art, which he is eager to salvage. The postmodern reader, however, could be inclined to question the possibility of extracting the truth from the thirteen ways of looking at the blackbird. In fact *Absalom, Absalom!* makes history a playing–field for the imagination, and the relationship between truth and imagination is not finally settled. The imagination alone is able to summon the past and its truth — but only as fiction. Truth and fiction enter into an indissoluble union, which for modernism and Faulkner is most disturbing, but also — so it seems at times — a reason for the author to play (in the postmodern mode of possibility narration) with the expectations, reasonings and concerns of the reader. The fact that all possibilities lead to an impossibility (of telling the truth and establishing one's identity) is the final (suspensive) irony of the book and indicates that it breaks open the existential mold and opens up towards something new and playful which is still undefinable. This needs further analysis.

4. Conceptualizations of the Sutpen Story

It seems obvious that history, the legend or saga of the South,[14] in *Absalom, Absalom!* is highly organized, but that this organization fails or rather cancels itself. The *text of the story* or the plot, as it is arranged by the knowledge and conjectures of at least four narrators, on a psychological level reveals the fixation, even mania of a late–comer to the aristocratic culture of the South, Colonel Sutpen, who is obsessed with his "design" of success, the (American) dream of power and wealth. In his life the heroic adventure of settling the country is repeated and the development of the South foreshortened, so that his fate reflects paradigmatically the myth of the frontier and the tragedy of Southern history. Furthermore, his difficulties and the ultimate failure of his design appear at least partly as the result of the racial and cultural contrasts and conflicts of a time characterized by upheaval and radical change. His design must fail because of the absoluteness, recklessness and even cruelty (towards himself, his family and the others) with which he pursues it, but it is also doomed by the anachronistic nature of a new beginning in a highly developed conventional culture, which is already on the decline; and it is finally destroyed by the Civil War in which Sutpen participates gallantly as a colonel in the army of the South. The author supplies the historical matrix of the South, but he enriches and complicates it by applying to it all three of the fundamental modalities under which we experience historical time: (1) the irreversibility of events in their sequence and their consequences; (2) the repetition and repeatability of events; and (3) the simultaneity of the nonsynchronous.[15]

The Sutpen story is according to Mr. Compson about "simple passion and simple violence", "distinct and uncomplex" (*AA*, 89). The plot thus could consist of well–structured "events" as outlined above. The text of the story, however, is not about simple urges but about complex interpretations and intricate variations and possibilities of meanings. The explications of the narrators show "some regard for cause and effect even if none for logical sequence and continuity" (*AA*, 247). Finally they run up against the "inexplicable" (*AA*, 101). The organization of history through narration finally fails because it cannot answer Rosa's desperate question "*Why? Why? and Why?*" (*AA*, 167). The all–inclusiveness of the applied

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[14] George Marion O'Donnell, "Faulkner's Mythology," [1939] reprinted in *William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism*, ed. Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery, 3rd ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963), 82ff. See also, in the same volume, Malcolm Cowley, "Introduction to *The Portable Faulkner*," 94–109.

[15] Reinhart Koselleck has developed the concept of "formal time structures," which is here followed ("Geschichte, Geschehen und formale Zeitstrukturen," *Geschichte, Ereignis und Erzählung*, 212–22).

patterns of meaning and design has the reverse effect in that they overdetermine, which leads to a zero– or non–determination of history in the text. As the consequence of (and the reason for) this failure two quite different things become obvious.

First, the narrators have obviously chosen a *sujet* they do not know enough, sometimes it appears they know very little, about. The result is that the (abstractable) level of irreversible happenings in the continuity of change, which guarantees the actuality of what is told and is the basis for the story, disintegrates and with it the truth factor of actions and events.[16] An obvious example is the debate of the critics about whether Charles Bon's mother is indeed part Negro, a circumstance upon which hinges the interpretation of the deadly struggle between Henry and Bon; then the question remains unanswered how many new "facts" were provided to Quentin the night he and Rosa visited Sutpen's Hundred and met Clytie and Henry and how many he merely imagined. People and events become mere "shadows."

Second, instead of the history of surface facts and processes, History as deep structure, as an all–encompassing, rather mythical and mystic force takes over. Its "*occurrences ... stop us dead as though by some inpalpable intervention, like a sheet of glass through which we watch all subsequent events transpire as though in a soundless vacuum, and fade, vanish*" (*AA*, 151). With the double concept of presence and absence of history, the view of history as a unified but indefinable (brute) force and as a "soundless vacuum," further complications arise quite logically. History as active Primal Force and/or passive empty Time/Space, in its indefiniteness, unknowability and simple otherness usurps its narrative organization, i.e., the patterns of "domesticating" motivations, of psychological, sociological and historical explanations; it only admits "*that spark, that dream which, as the globy and complete instant of its freedom mirrors and repeats (repeats? creates, reduces to a fragile evanescent iridescent sphere) all of space and time and massy earth*" (*AA*, 143). History in fact dissolves its determining man–made structures and renders itself available to possibility thinking, which is (in postmodernism) the fragile expression of what one might hesitantly call freedom.

This deconstruction (and playful reconstruction) of history can also be explained from the side of the experiencing and conceptualizing subject. The fact that the story has been *existentialized* on both sides, on the side

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[16] See, for instance, Susan Resneck Parr, "The Fourteenth Image of the Blackbird: Another Look at Truth in *Absalom, Absalom!*," *Arizona Quarterly*, 35 (Summer, 1979), 154–64. Some of the "facts" established by Brooks (see note 1) have been generally disputed; see, for instance, Carl E. Rollyson, "The Re–Creation of the Past in *Absalom, Absalom!*," *Mississippi Quarterly*, 29 (Summer, 1976), 361–74.

of the narrated persons, Sutpen and his family, as well as on that of the narrators, especially Quentin and Rosa, causes complications. The existentialization of history can be regarded as a final attempt at humanizing and "domesticating" history. The failure of this endeavor to make sense, to establish the "truth," via existential designs of action or thought paradoxically leads to a mutual de-existentialization of the situations, the characters, and the narrators. Tensions are loosened up by overextension and open up to play with possibilities, especially in language.

From the modes and results of the deconstruction and reconstruction of history in *Absalom, Absalom!* a general conclusion may be drawn. One can assume that the loss of a firm epistemological stance and of the ability to organize and demonstrate history leads in the novel to the existentialization of history in the story. In a second step the existentialization of history and historical truth, or rather of the search for historical truth, is consequently radicalized and "doubled" by its introduction into the situation of the narrator(s) and their narrating, which forms a story of its own. This brings with it an (over)complication in the now also existential interrelationship between story (characters) and discourse (narrators). The existentialization of the situation of the narrated figures confines truth to the personal sphere and restricts the field of historic truth. The existentialization of the situation of the narrator(s) leads to self-reflexivity, doubt and the assertion of the self at the point where a balanced and comprehensive perspective would be needed to supply a meaningful historical overview. The failure to provide such a panoramic vista either detracts from the story by concentrating on the situation of the narrators or causes an imaginative identification between narrated characters and narrators which again blurs positions and identities (both occur in *Absalom, Absalom!*). This leads to a dissolution of the concepts of identity and historic truth, and in a further step to the disposability of both under the perspective of imaginative play. The step towards the final stage of this development is taken only in postmodernism, but Faulkner's novel goes part of the way, as can be seen by an analysis of the narrators and their "voices" and modes of narration, which replace the mode of actuality with that of possibility.

5. Individual Narrators, Transindividual Voices, and Possibility Narration

The situations of the narrators are varied in their motives and voices. There are, in addition to reported narrations, generally speaking, two existentially concerned narrators and two more distant ones (and an impersonal

narrator, whose voice at times intrudes into the text). Rosa Coldfield, who was directly involved in Sutpen's story, evokes the past "as though by outraged recapitulation" (*AA*, 7–8). Quentin, whose identity is at stake, has heard parts of Sutpen's story from Rosa Coldfield and parts from his father, who in turn has heard reports and conjectures from Quentin's grandfather, General Compson, who knew Sutpen personally and supported him. Mr. Compson appears psychologically interested but applies his own sardonic cynicism; he is analytically engaged in Sutpen's story, but this only leads him to puzzlement. Shreve, the Canadian, who shares with Quentin a room at Harvard, takes part in the reconstruction of the past; he is the most flexible of the narrators, oscillating between direct involvement and playful conjectures.

With growing distance from the actuality of the historical occurrences, to which Rosa is closest, an increase in conjecturing takes place. Imaginings take the place of reporting; or rather, possibility narration overcodes the report of historical facts. But this diminishing of historical actuality in favor of conjectures does not decrease the existential involvement of the two young narrators in the cold room at Harvard. It actually intensifies it and thereby paradoxically expands their narrative range, for instance into an identification with Henry Sutpen and Charles Bon, the two sons of Thomas Sutpen, half–brothers involved in deadly family conflict. The possibilities of transgressing boundaries increase greatly: (1) The barrier between the narrators is dissolved as they are all, albeit in different gradations, listeners as well as speakers (recounting the story in "some happy marriage of speaking and hearing," *AA*, 316); (2) the distinctions between narrators and narrated characters are suspended; and (3) finally, Quentin and Shreve, while identifying with the figures of the past, melt their two narrating voices into one. It has become a commonplace to note that in hindsight their urging voice together with the others appears as a transindividual Faulknerian Voice.

The author finally assembles all narrative voices into one big Voice of Narrating and Conjecturing. This Voice curtails the aspect of (psychological, sociological, historical, etc.) motivation in narrating, while it enhances the epistemological and narratological viewpoints. The transindividual voice which shows through all the individual narrators and colors their narratives, this overarching synthetic voice, can be understood as the concretization of the above–mentioned *anthropological principle of narration*, which, as was discussed, is the only means to reconstruct the (historical and personal) past; as such it is also the fundamental principle of conception and integration in the story, in which it, however, fails. It here comes close to appearing motiveless and unable to define the subject or final theme of the narrative. In fact, the appendix of *Absalom, Absalom!* of-

fers us a chronology, a genealogy and a map, all the traditional instruments of ordering history, from which the narrative so obviously departs and towards which it yet so urgently strives. The listings of historical "facts" appear both as a mere *frame of reference* and as a suspensive ironization or rather *parody* of the narrative text — again pointing towards postmodern narrative techniques of deconstruction, which in their most radical modes establish history as a collection of linguistic fictions among other fictions of the mind.

In *Absalom, Absalom!* the narration of history always reflects the issues of narratology. The problems of story–telling are part of the telling of the story. The self–reflexiveness of the text — an element that connects modernism and postmodernism — manifests itself primarily and directly in terms of possibility narration; and possibility narration determines the *language* of the discourse. Here it is richest in metaphors of all of Faulkner's novels and develops a metaphorically saturated and playfully complicated rhetorical style:[17] It often calls the attention of the reader away from the narrated material to the process of narrating. But Faulkner also uses direct signals for indicating the probability or possibility modes of narrating and in a fascinatingly illogical way interrelates invention and truth. According to the impersonal narrator, who variously comments on the truth value of, especially, Quentin's and Shreve's conjectures, Eulalia Bon's drawing room is a room "of baroque and fusty magnificence, which Shreve had invented and which was probably true enough," and Eulalia herself may be a fiction "whom Shreve and Quentin had likewise invented and which was likewise probably true enough" (*AA*, 335). One of the most enigmatic figures of the novel, Charles Bon, who is supposedly part Negro and Sutpen's son and who turns out to be the destructive agent for Sutpen's design, is an important case in point. A distraught Rosa Coldfield even goes so far as to make the following remark about Charles Bon's face: "*But I never saw it. I do not even know of my own knowledge that Ellen ever saw it, that Judith ever loved it, that Henry slew it: so who will dispute me when I say, Why did I not invent, create it?*" (*AA*, 147). Rosa goes on to say she has never met Bon and that she was unsure, when she helped carry Bon's coffin, if there was a body in it (*AA*, 151). Furthermore, one of the most impor-

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[17] John T. Matthews can, therefore, quite rightfully call his book *The Play of Faulkner's Language* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982). For an examination of Faulkner's language, which is here reduced to one important aspect, see Matthews' book, where he speaks of "a playful language that disseminates meaning" in *Absalom, Absalom!* (119), and Joseph Reed, Jr., *Faulkner's Narrative*, 145–75. See also James Guetti, *The Limits of Metaphor* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1965) and Jürgen Peper, *Bewußtseinslagen des Erzählens und erzählte Wirklichkeiten* (Leiden, 1966), 269–91.

tant causal links, upon which Shreve's reconstruction of the story depends, Bon's knowledge about his heritage, is put into doubt by Shreve himself: "nobody ever did know if Bon ever knew Sutpen was his father or not, whether he was trying to revenge his mother or not" (*AA*, 269). And even Bon's racial heritage is made a matter of conjecture (see *AA*, 266). Finally the novel confirms what Shreve states as a kind of final judgment on truth: "You cannot know ... whether what you see is what you are looking at or what you are believing" (*AA*, 314).

The linguistic consequence of this pattern of uncertainty is the possibility stance in narrating. "Perhapses" and "maybes" frame so many key sentences of the narrative that they become keywords pointing to the fictitious state of truth. This "maybe" attitude characterizes the discourse of all the narrators, even though in different degrees and under various aspects. It again takes on a wide variety of meanings, from existential involvement in possibilities that never materialized to mere playful conjectures. Rosa Coldfield in her existential concern and unmitigated outrage sets against the actuality of the past the existential truth of the dream, the *might–have–been* as something that has its own story, is as real as the actual past and has to be seen with it in order to constitute the whole truth. She tells Quentin: "*There is a might–have–been which is more true than truth*" (*AA*, 143); "*... there is a might–have–been which is the single rock we cling to above the maelstrom of unbearable reality*" (*AA*, 150). And Quentin Compson takes up this existential stance: "'there are some things that just have to be whether they are or not, have to be a damn sight more than some other things that maybe are and it dont matter a damn whether they are or not'" (*AA*, 322). This "*must–be" stance*, so often heard in the narrator's words and voices, is the existential variation of possibility narration.

Mr. Compson, the more distant narrator, transfers the possibility view to the whole field of history. The searching spirit that tries to make sense out of history encounters only words and shadows behind which outer and inner reality, truth and also the concept of art appear blurred, inconsequential and without meaning. The concept of language as the final barrier, which becomes important for postmodernism, looms here in the background:

> It's just incredible. It just does not explain. Or perhaps that's it: they dont explain and we are not supposed to know. We have a few old mouth–to–mouth tales; we exhume from old trunks and boxes and drawers letters without salutation or signature, in which men and women who once lived and breathed are now merely initials or nicknames out of some now incomprehensible affection which sound to us like Sanskrit or Chocktaw; we see dimly people, the people in whose living blood and seed we ourselves lay dormant and waiting, in this shadowy attenuation of time possessing now heroic proportions, performing their

> acts of simple passion and simple violence, impervious to time and inexplicable — Yes, Judith, Bon, Henry, Sutpen: all of them. They are there, yet something is missing; they are like a chemical formula exhumed along with the letters from that forgotten chest, carefully, the paper old and faded and falling to pieces, the writing faded, almost indecipherable, yet meaningful, familiar in shape and sense, the name and presence of volatile and sentient forces; you bring them together in the proportions called for, but nothing happens; you re–read, tedious and intent, poring, making sure that you have forgotten nothing, made no miscalculations; you bring them together again and again nothing happens: just the words, the symbols, the shapes themselves, shadowy inscrutable and serene, against that turgid background of a horrible and bloody mischancing of human affairs. (*AA*, 100–101)

Quentin uses the "maybe"–concept to make all figures of the novel, the narrated persons and the narrators, into characters of one all–encompassing universal story, leveling the differences between past and present, story and discourse:

> "Yes," Quentin said. "The two children" thinking Yes. Maybe we are both Father. Maybe nothing ever happens once and is finished. Maybe happen is never once but like ripples maybe on water after the pebble sinks, the ripples moving on, spreading, the pool attached by a narrow umbilical water–cord to the next pool which the first pool feeds, has fed, did feed, let this second pool contain a different temperature of water, a different molecularity of having seen, felt, remembered, reflect in a different tone the infinite unchanging sky, it doesn't matter: that pebble's watery echo whose fall it did not even see moves across its surface too at the original ripple–space, to the old ineradicable rhythm thinking Yes, we are both Father. Or maybe Father and I are both Shreve, maybe it took Father and me both to make Shreve or Shreve and me both to make father or maybe Thomas Sutpen to make all of us. (*AA*, 261–262; italics eliminated)

The voice of an impersonal narrator finally interferes in order to summarily blur the difference between the narrators, between speaking aloud and mere thinking, and between reality and fiction:

> It was Shreve speaking, though save for the slight difference which the intervening degrees of latitude had inculcated in them ..., it might have been either of them and was in a sense both: both thinking as one, the voice which happened to be speaking the thought only the thinking become audible, vocal; the two of them creating between them, out of the rag–tag and bob–ends of old tales and talking, people who perhaps had never existed at all anywhere, who, shadows, were shadows not of flesh and blood which had lived and died but shadows in turn of what were (to one of them at least, to Shreve) shadows too, quiet as the visible murmur of their vaporizing breath. (*AA*, 303)

What remains at the end is the voice narrating, which is often dreamlike, can only speak of "shadows" (another crucial word in the novel) and is unable to achieve the status of actuality for the shadowy characters and happenings of the past, or order and systematize them into patterns of meaning. What remains of the self is, in Rosa Coldfield's words: "*the*

raging and incredulous recounting (which enables man to bear with living)" (*AA*, 161). This points to Beckett and his reductive identification of living one's life and telling stories. Reading *Absalom, Absalom!*, one is above all reminded of one of the foremost writers of postmodern history novels, John Barth, who says: "the truth of fiction is that fact is fantasy: the made–up story is a model of the world."[18]

7. Narrative and Design

What finally remains to be referred to is the *design* of the story. The failure of Sutpen's design of action and of Quentin's mental design is obviously repeated in the failure of a coherent and meaningful narrative design. But this failure of design can also be interpreted — at least in part — as a transformation and dynamization of the narrative design in its modern sense of a centered structure, for example, by transferring it into the rhythmic modulations of a "*Voice*," dissolving time into a rhythm of absence and presence, loss and recovery, utterings and silence (see formulations like the "long silence of notpeople, in notlanguage," *AA*, 9). This process of (re)presentation or writing and erasure (Derrida) is corroborated by Judith's explanation to Quentin's grandmother of why she hands her Charles Bon's letter. Answering her question: "Me? You want me to keep it?," Judith says:

> Yes ... Or destroy it. As you like. Read it if you like or dont read it if you like. Because you make so little impression, you see ... then all of a sudden it's all over and all you have left is a block of stone with scratches on it provided there was someone to remember to have the marble scratched ... maybe if you could go to someone, the stranger the better, and give them something — a scrap of paper — something, anything, it not to mean anything in itself and them not even to read it or keep it, not even bother to throw it away or destroy it, at least it would be something just because it would have happened, be remembered even if only from passing from one hand to another, one mind to another, and it would be at least a scratch, something, something that might make a mark on something that *was* once for the reason that it can die someday, while the block of stone cant be *is* because it never can become *was* because it cant ever die or perish ... . (*AA*, 127–128)

Here we have a definite premonition of the postmodern concept of design: design not as centered structure but as something "that *was* once for the reason that it can die someday," something to be erased, to show up in time only by first being there and then being gone. This is the dynamization of structure: it exists only for the purpose of being deconstructed.

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[18] John Barth, *Chimera* (New York: Random House, 1972), 246.

Robbe–Grillet defines his purpose in similar terms.[19] The search for historical truth, the attempt at existential syntheses, the (reader's) knowledge of the failure of design and its transformation into play are ironically written into one of the few "documents" (Charles Bon's letter to Judith) that the narrators' attempt at reconstructing historical truth can fall back upon. The lesson is that only the imagination can reconstruct history and connect it to the present.

In *Absalom, Absalom!* the striving of the imagination still has an existential basis in the suffering and the heroic struggle of man, his will to endure and his "saying No to time" or "No to death."[20] But the process of narration and its "maybe" perspective undercuts the existentialization of life and the assertion of humanistic values. By its own logic of reversion and modulation the possibility stance willfully exaggerates and distorts the rhetoric, which in its convolutions not only connects the present with the past (and the future),[21] but also exchanges viewpoints and explanations and expresses the modalities and changes of perspective. The "perhaps" standpoint deconstructs binary polarities like present–past, appearance–reality, deception–truth, arbitrariness–design and suffering–joy as fictions. It tends to dissolve paradoxes not by suicide[22] but in play which, if it is taken to the "End of the Road" (John Barth), cancels existentialism as a principal constituent of the human situation in favor of what Nietzsche called "perspectivism."

In other words, the uncertainties of epistemology are ready to destabilize ethics and all fixed moral positions. As Mr. Compson says, "It will do no harm to hope" (*AA*, 377); but it will not be of much use either, since the human condition does not give much reason for it and puts an abrupt end to it with death. In order to hope, the esthetics of memory

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19 Alain Robbe–Grillet, *For a New Novel: Essays on Fiction*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 143ff.

20 See Robert W. Hamblin, "'Saying No to Death': Toward William Faulkner's Theory of Fiction," *A Cosmos of My Own: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha 1980*, ed. Doreen Fowler and Ann J. Abadie, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1981), 3–35.

21 It is Faulkner's "ambition ... to put everything into one sentence — not only the present but the whole past on which it depends and which keeps overtaking the present, second by second" (Cowley, *The Faulkner–Cowley File*, 112)

22 It is interesting to note that Faulkner erased a sentence from the text of *Absalom, Absalom!* which referred to Quentin's later suicide, as recounted in *The Sound and the Fury*. On the other hand, he admitted that one can and perhaps also should see the two Quentins of the two novels in a relation to one another — a relationship, however, that one could not simply conceive of in terms of continuity and consistency, but also and perhaps even preferably under the perspective of discontinuity and imaginative modulation. This is even true to a certain extent of the one Quentin in *Absalom, Absalom!*, who is, in fact, two Quentins: "he [Shreve] would seem to listen to two separate Quentins now — the Quentin Compson preparing for Harvard in the South ... and the Quentin Compson who was still too young to deserve yet to be a ghost ... the two separate Quentins now" *(AA*, 9).

and action will have to be dominated or even substituted by the esthetics of the imagination. Faulkner himself asserts the value of invention and of esthetic play with form and design and even with the moral world (Shreve, at one point, says: "Let me play a while now" [*AA*, 280]). Having the choice between the necessities of time, i.e., its logical connections, and the liberating force of the time– and form–breaking imagination, Faulkner chooses the creative and transformative power of the imagination. Speaking of his manipulation of "facts" the author says: "When you go to the trouble to invent a private domain of your own, then you're the master of time, too. I have the right, I think, to shift these things around wherever it sounds best, and I can move them about in time and, if necessary, change their names" (*FU*, 29).

Modernism developed the esthetic construct as private domain and montage or collage as methods of construction.[23] Postmodernism (and this is also true of the postmodern reader) radicalizes them by finally taking seriously the freedom of play that contemporary epistemology allows, in order to re–fictionalize — to speak in Coleridge's terms — all historical and existential "fixities and definites."[24]

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[23] See Bruce Kawin, "The Montage Element in Faulkner's Fiction," *Faulkner, Modernism and Film: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1979*, ed. Evans Harrington and Ann J. Abadie (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1979), 20.

[24] Coleridge about "Fancy" (*Biographia Literaria*, ch. 13). — The postmodern view of history as fiction expresses itself in the parodying of plot patterns, which leads to a "surplus" of plot, thereby "loosening" the pattern of cause and effect. In Barth's *Sot–Weed Factor* this method of arbitrary patterning results in "a fantastically baroque plot" ("J. Barth, Interviewed by J.D. Bellamy," *The New Fiction: Interviews with Innovative American Writers* ed. J. D. Bellamy [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974, 15]). With the plot patterns many postmodern authors deconstruct the logical pattern of history by (1) placing it outside (the chronological sequence of) time, (2) multiplying the patterns of cause and effect, (3) abolishing teleology (Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow*), (4) using "Design as game. Randomness as design," (Coover, *The Public Burning*, New York: Viking, 1977, 190) and thus trying "to sabotage history. They won't know whether we are serious or whether we are writing fiction," (Ishmael Reed in a pre–*Mumbo Jumbo* interview, cited by Richard Martin, "Clio Bemused: The Uses of History in Contemporary American Fiction," *Sub–Stance*, 9 [1980], 21).